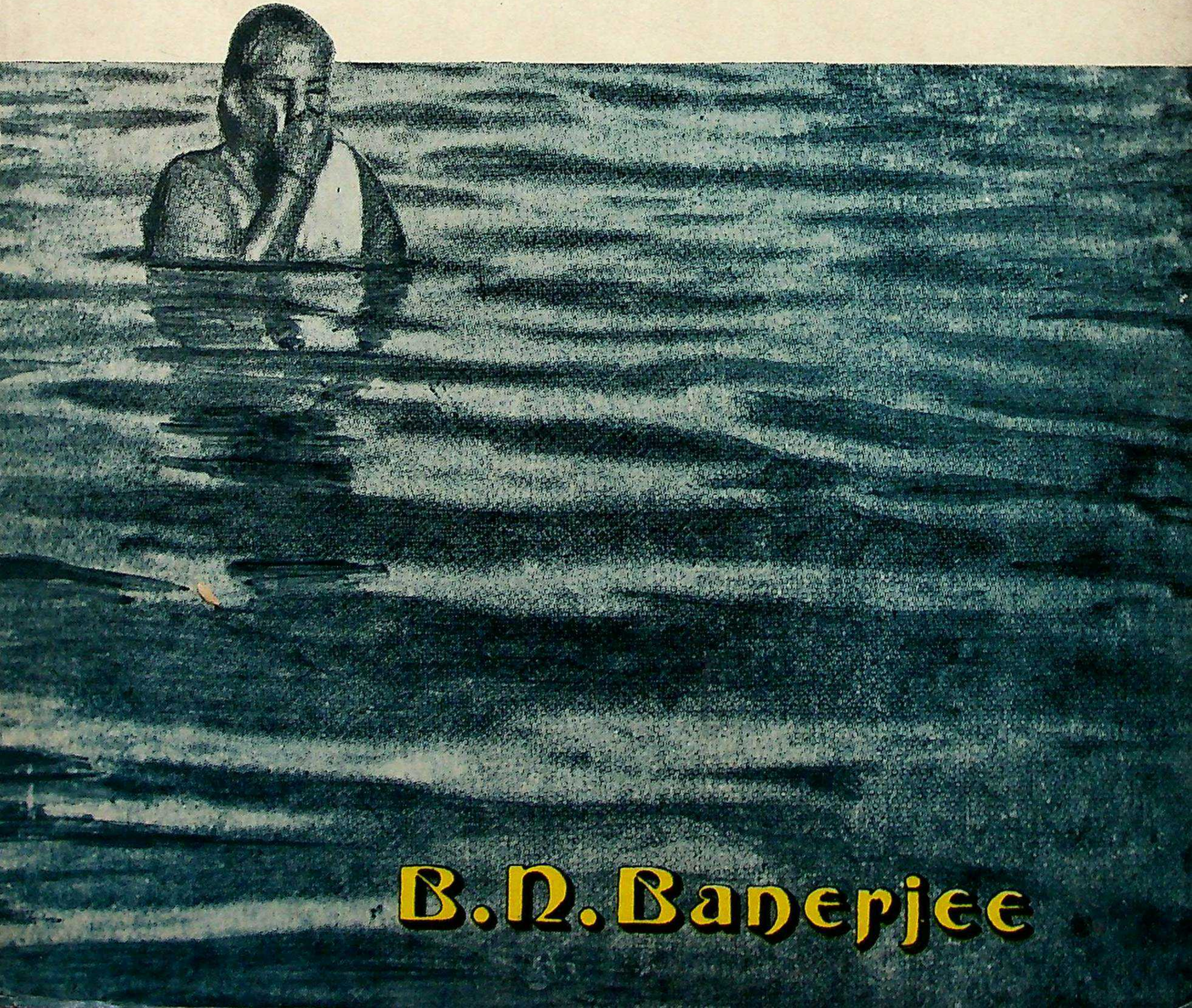
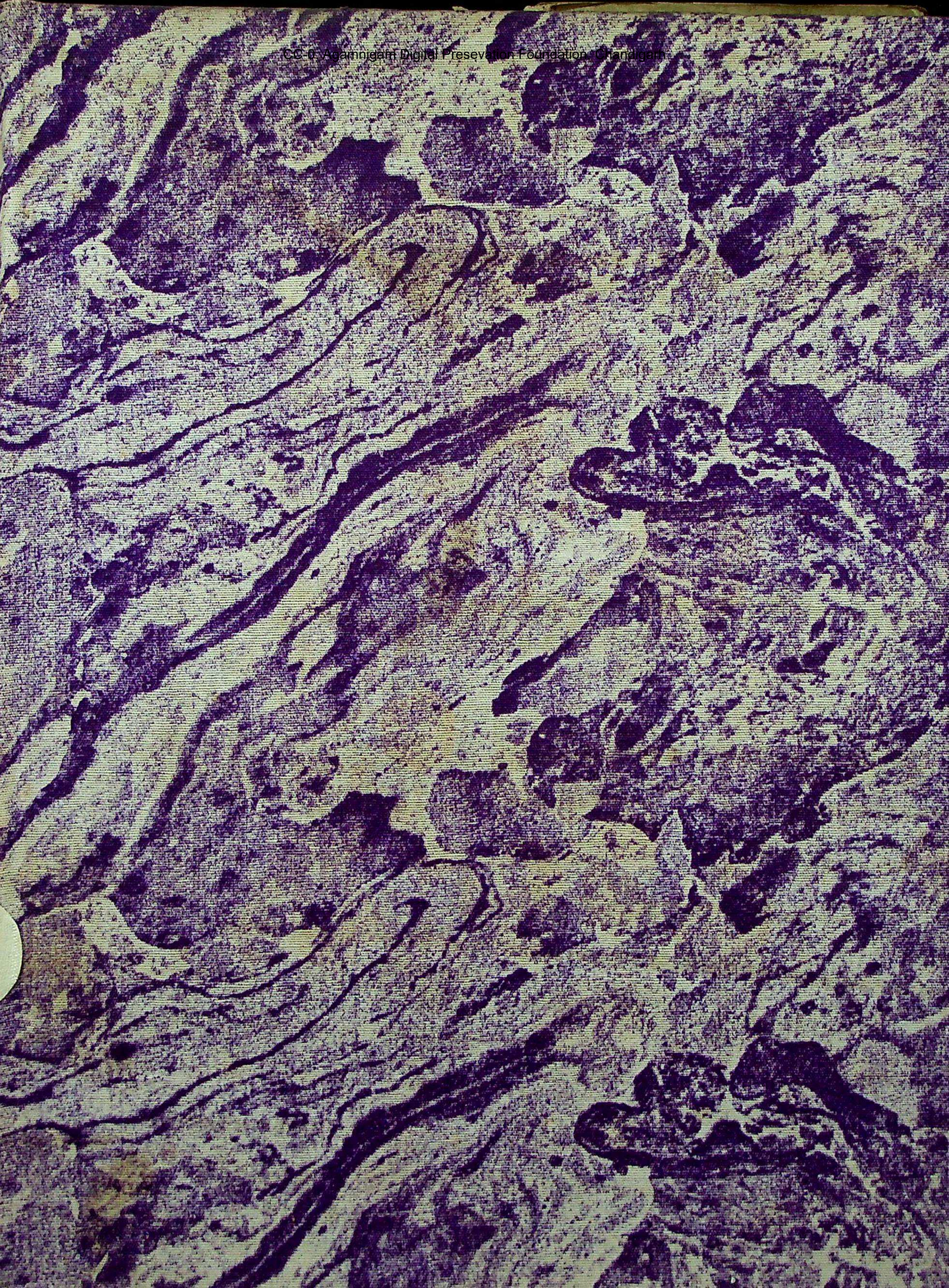
Hindu Culture Custom & Ceremony



B. N. Banerjee



5286

HINDU CULTURE CUSTOM AND CEREMONY

HINDU CULTURE CUSTOM AND CEREMONY

By
B.N. Banerjee

AGAM KALA PRAKASHAN
DELHI

First Published 1979

© Brojendra Nath Banerjee (b. 1934)

State Museum Library
Lucknow

5286

Published by Agam Prasad, M.A. for AGAM KALA PRAKASHAN,
1736, Tri Nagar, Delhi-110035, Phone : 563395
Printed by PRINT INDIA, A-38/2, Maya Puri Industrial Area, Phase-I,
New Delhi-110064

Dedication

In Grateful Remembrance of

my

"PISHIMA"

(Who rests in the abode of bliss)

PREFACE

This Book, "Hindu Culture Custom and , Ceremony" is written in pursuance of a long cherished project that I have had in view. It is, in fact, my continuing effort and endeavour to communicate more meaningfully to a cross-cultural situation the Hindu essence of spirituality, its purity, its simplicity and its awareness of human divinity. And for this, I seek to utilize the inspiration, discipline and insight which I have acquired over these years.

Hindu Culture is a great challenge to developing humanity as it had never existed before. This challenge could not be met by mere excitement of drugs or violence or sex but by calm, cool and quiet thinking. The whole world has realized, this ultimate truth of the Hindu Culture that more than economic, resources, basic thinking people like Hindu Saints are needed to meet this challenge of the present day strife and confusion.

In preparing this book from various collections, essays, opinions, commentaries, speeches, etc. my indebtedness has really been great. Mr. Ashok Jambhekar, Assistant Librarian of Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi has generously given permission to use their library facilities. Ramakrishna Mission Library in New Delhi has also been a great source of inspiration for collection of materials for this book.

I like to thank Mr. M.L. Renjen, the former Principal of the Central Air Force School, New Delhi, currently the Education Adviser to Mr. Satya Paul of the well known Apeejay-Surrendra Industrial House of all India repute, for reading my manuscript, but with a gratitude that leaves him happily free of my responsibility for any aberration. I need to thank specially Mr. K.D. Thomas for his cheerful labour on an exacting secretarial task and timely co-operation.

Finally, my humble gratitude is to my respected father and mother who have been able to mould my present thought-pattern and attitude to life responsible for the greatest single impetus of writing this book.

Brojendra Nath Banerjee

C-17, Nizamuddin West
New Delhi-110013 (INDIA)
April 1, 1978

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Hindu Logos – OM
2. Sanctification of Sacred Thread
3. At the time of "Jaymala", the bride officially welcomes the groom to her house for Wedding. The groom reciprocates by garlanding her.
4. Chanting of Hindu Seed words—Gayatri Mantra
5. Seed words are taught at the time of Upanayan
6. The Husband accepted the wife at the end of the ceremony
7. Shaving off hair—an act of purification before the *Upanayan* ceremony
8. A Saint and a Hindu Brahmin are engaged in the vadic discourses
9. A Hindu Temple
10. Its said that the Hindu's worship Monkies, Cows, snakes.....
11. An Intellectual Hindu Brahmin
12. A Brahmin Lady
13. Worshipping the Tulsi Plant
14. A Brahmin worshipping a Hindu Deity
15. A Hindu Craftman
16. A Peasant Women
17. A Fisher Women
18. On his arrival at the bride's house, the bridegroom is welcomed with a *Titak* (a mark on his forehead).
19. A Hindu Farmer
20. A Higher caste modern girl
21. Bridegroom and bride are exchanging garlands during their Wedding
22. The bridegroom and bride are in front of the *Fire God*. The Priest is commissioning the wedding ceremony.

23. A Hindu bride
24. An elaborate pattern (Mehendi) on bride's hands
25. A Modern Hindu woman
26. A Hindu widow
27. A Temple dance
28. An entertainer
29. Festival of Lights
30. A beautiful Hindu Sculpture
31. A Dance of Destruction by Lord *Shiva*

CONTENTS

Dedications v
Preface vii
List of Plates ix

PART-I

HINDU CULTURE 1-86

Introduction 3; Origin of the Vedas 4; The Hindu Logos—"OM" 4; Gayatri Mantra (Seed Word) 7; The Efficacy of Mantras 8; The Cultural Symbols of Hinduism 9; Hindu Trinity (Trimurti) 10; Salagram Shila 12; Swastika 13; Hindu Culture is based on the Vedas 14; Teachings of the Upanishads 17; Plato and Upanishads—Striking Similarities 19; Hindu God is one without a second 20; What's Hindu Religion 25; The Real one Has Many names 26; Teachings of the Bhagvad-Gita 27; Krishna-Christ differences 30; The Hindu Concept of soul 32; The Mystical experience of the Hindus 34; The Hindu Doctrine of Transmigration of soul 38; The Hindu Concept of Salvation 40; An Immortal Upanishadic Quest for Salvation 42; Life After Life 44; Know Thyself 45; Hindu culture bridges the chasm between East and West 51; Difference between Hinduism and Christianity 57; The Hall-Mark of Hindu Culture 59; Fundamental of Hindu culture 61; Hindu culture indissoluble 68; Hindu Culture is Discipline 76; Yoga 76; Fast 84

PART-II

HINDU CUSTOM 87-137

Four stages of life 89; A Hindu Teacher 93; A Hindu Householder 93; The Law of Karma 98; The Hindu Concept of Life 102; What's Hindu Dharma 104; Hindu Charity 106; Who is Hindu ? 108; Reasons and not Scripture to Guide Hindu Life

109; Three sects of Hinduism 110; Hindu Caste 110; Origin of Caste 110; Merits of Caste System 119; Many Sub-castes 121; Minorities Commission 122; The Hindu Legend concerning the Origin of caste 124; Sub-Castes Among the Brahmins 124; Brahmins 126; Kshatriyas 127; Vaishyas 127; Sudras 127; Summary 129; Duties of four castes 130; Expulsion from caste 131; Restoration to the original caste 133; Hindu attitude towards conversion 134

PART-III

HINDU CEREMONY 139-188

Introduction 139; A Hindu Family 143; Hindu Family—A Joint Family 144; Pitri Paksha 145; Purification of Rites of the Hindus 145; What's a Durbha Grass ? 146; The Tulsi—A plant for the Hindu ceremony 146; Almanac—Hindu Calendar for all ceremonies 147; A Purohit—A Hindu Pastor 148; The Foetus Laying Ceremony 149; The Male-Making Ceremony 149; The First Ceremony of the Infant 150; Woman's Confinement 150; Name Ceremony 151; Nishkarman Ceremony 152; Solid Food-Eating Ceremony 152; First Hair-cutting ceremony 153; School Going Ceremony 154; Hindu Baptism (Upanayan Ceremony) 155; Daily Pranayan 157; Samavartana Ceremony 158; Marriage Ceremony 158; Unmarried Women 160; Marriageable Age 161; Conditions for a Hindu Marriage 163; What's prohibited Relationship ? 163; Sapinda 163; What's a Gotra ? 164; Why such restrictions in Hindu Marriage ? 165; An Ideal Bride 165; Guardianship in Marriage 166; A Hindu Marriage is an Arranged Marriage 167; Hindu Wedding Fanfare 168; Responsibility of bride 171; The world of bride after marriage 172; Sexual life of the Couple 175; Husband and wife relationship 176; Second Marriage 178; Divorce 178; Grounds of divorce 179; Divorce around the world 179; Maintenance of wife 182; A Hindu widow 183; Hindu concept of fate 184; Funeral Ceremony 185; Mourning observance 187; Sanchayana 188

PART-IV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HINDU CEREMONY AND FESTIVAL 189-200

PART-V

BIBLIOGRAPHY 201-208

INDEX 209-219

Plates

PART I

HINDU CULTURE

109; Three sects of Hinduism 110; Hindu Caste 110; Origin of Caste 110; Merits of Caste System 119; Many Sub-castes 121; Minorities Commission 122; The Hindu Legend concerning the Origin of caste 124; Sub-Castes Among the Brahmins 124; Brahmins 126; Kshatriyas 127; Vaishyas 127; Sudras 127; Summary 129; Duties of four castes 130; Expulsion from caste 131; Restoration to the original caste 133; Hindu attitude towards conversion 134

PART-III

HINDU CEREMONY 139-188

Introduction 139; A Hindu Family 143; Hindu Family—A Joint Family 144; Pitri Paksha 145; Purification of Rites of the Hindus 145; What's a Durbha Grass ? 146; The Tulsi—A plant for the Hindu ceremony 146; Almanac—Hindu Calendar for all ceremonies 147; A Purohit—A Hindu Pastor 148; The Foetus Laying Ceremony 149; The Male-Making Ceremony 149; The First Ceremony of the Infant 150; Woman's Confinement 150; Name Ceremony 151; Nishkarman Ceremony 152; Solid Food-Eating Ceremony 152; First Hair-cutting ceremony 153; School Going Ceremony 154; Hindu Baptism (Upanayan Ceremony) 155; Daily Pranayan 157; Samavartana Ceremony 158; Marriage Ceremony 158; Unmarried Women 160; Marriageable Age 161; Conditions for a Hindu Marriage 163; What's prohibited Relationship ? 163; Sapinda 163; What's a Gotra ? 164; Why such restrictions in Hindu Marriage ? 165; An Ideal Bride 165; Guardianship in Marriage 166; A Hindu Marriage is an Arranged Marriage 167; Hindu Wedding Fanfare 168; Responsibility of bride 171; The world of bride after marriage 172; Sexual life of the Couple 175; Husband and wife relationship 176; Second Marriage 178; Divorce 178; Grounds of divorce 179; Divorce around the world 179; Maintenance of wife 182; A Hindu widow 183; Hindu concept of fate 184; Funeral Ceremony 185; Mourning observance 187; Sanchayana 188

PART-IV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HINDU CEREMONY AND FESTIVAL 189-200

PART-V

BIBLIOGRAPHY 201-208

INDEX 209-219

Plates

PART I

HINDU CULTURE

I

INTRODUCTION

From dim distant past, Hinduism has been the cradle of man's civilization. Hinduism is the vision of God, and an attitude to life. It is a commitment to discipline and devotion. Devotion to religion and a code of conduct are the distinctive features of Hindu culture. And the Vedanta[1] is the Alpha and Omega of the culture of the Hindus. Hindu culture is largely the history of the Vedanta and the Vedanta is the end of the *Vedas*. The Vedas are a revelation, a repository of truths that cannot be attained by other means of knowledge. The *Vedas* are concerned with ends and means, the ultimate goal of life and the ways of reaching it. In other words, Hindu culture is called the vedic religion. The *Vedas* make a special claim to be divine in their origin. Whereas the Bible of the Christians or the Koran of the Muslims and other revelations of the word of God owe their sacred authority either to divine inspiration or to delivery of the sacred message through an angel or a special prophet from God, the Vedas are simply said to be divine in their origin. They are themselves authority, being the knowledge of Eternal God.

According to Sayanacharya, the learned commentator of the Vedas, God created the whole Universe out of the knowledge of the Vedas. That connotes that the vedic knowledge comes even before the creation of the Universe.

"*YO VEDEBHYAH AKHILAM JAGAT NIRMANE*"

Similar acknowledgement was recorded by the Gospel according to St. John : "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John: 1 : 1-4)[2]

---

[1] Vedanta—the concluding portions of the Vedas.

[2] Gospel according to St John.

The Vedas are eternal. The Vedas have lasted even to-date from the beginning of time. The Vedas are the great spiritual laws. The Hindu saints have discovered them in every age by directly, perceiving the spiritual laws of God in a state of transcendental consciousness. And these truths can be perceived again and again at all times in all ages through this means. This is what Swami Vivekananda declared, "Of all the scriptures of the world, it is the Vedas alone that declare that even the study of the Vedas is secondary. The real study is that by which we realise the unchangable" (*Mundaka Upanished*)

II

ORIGIN OF THE VEDAS

"Gods performed a sacrifical rite mentally meditating on the transcendental *purusha* as the sacrifice itself. From that sacrifice, which is the *purusha* (the transcendental being) come out, the *Rig Veda*, the *Sana Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, and the *Atharva Veda* i. e. four different Vedas".

A passage in the *Satapatha Brahmana* of the Veda reads :

"As clouds of smoke come out from a damp wood on fire, so have the Vedas come out like breath from the Supreme Being". According to legendary account Brahma the creator in the Hindu Trinity first received the knowledge of the Vedas and this knowledge gradually descended to the Hindu saints. The Hindu saints are highly "evolved souls". At the beginning of a cycle are born the Hindu saints with perfect knowledge, which they come to be endowed with by virtue of the high stage of evolution reached by them in previous cycles. They are, therefore, the special messengers of God for the transmission of the eternal knowledge of God through the great cycles of creation.

The Hindu theory of evolution is one of a continuous birth and death in an infinite series. The knowledge of God descends throughout the entire process. So it is due to the effort of these "evolved souls" (the Hindu saints) that religion first enters the world. Thus the Vedas are the earliest records[3] of the conceptions of spiritual life. They are genuinely lofty metaphysical and spiritual in ideas and have inspired the Hindu saints and philosophers from the earliest times and still are continuing to be the fountain head of spiritual life of the Hindus today.

III

THE HINDU LOGOS "OM"

Brahma, the first born of God was meditating upon the supreme Brahaman (the ultimate reality) through His grace, and the eternal word, "*OM*" (the logos) was manifested within his heart. "*OM*" is the seed of all knowledge and of all thought.[4]

---

[3] *Rig Veda*—Not later than 1500 B.C.

[4] Of the platonic philosophy of logos—the identity of word and thought.

You will find the similarity of the thought in the gospel according to St. John. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". The knowledge of the Vedas was manifested to Brahma by the sound of "O*M*".

"*OM*" is seed and sound. It may consist of a syllable or a number of syllables. The sound (*dhwani*) produced by the utterance of the syllable (or syllables) is equivalent in human speech to the original subtle sound-vibration which is produced by the movement of the forces (of consciousness) while manifesting a thing. That subtle sound is the true name of the thing manifested and to repeat it is to call the thing into awareness, into active being. This is the main principle of the *Mantra* (power of the seed word) to utter a *Mantra* is to invoke the deity signified by it.

"*OM*" is the most powerful *Mantra*. You may repeat it in seven symphonies —seven mounting and seven descending scales: *Aum*, *Aum*, *Aum*...*Aum* is Brahman (the ultimate being): it is the primordial sound principle, the word of God. It contains three fundamental sounds, *a*, *u*, *m*. *A* is the pure Almighty Grace. It is the universe of beings pervaded by the Grace. M is man, the individual in whom it is the soul. The individual, universal and the transcendental souls are pervaded by the unique. One who is all, and all-in-all. The Hindus meditate upon that. That is the meaning of the *Mantra* of the one sound—*AUM*.

AUM is the *Mantra* of the introverted mind to find out '*Atman*' (the Supreme one) which is the substratum of the universe. "*A*" comes from the throat, "*U*" from the mouth and "M" from the lips and they form the beginning, middle and end of vocal sounds. The crescent mark and dot above *AUM* represents prime consciousness which is '*Atman*' (the Supreme Being). The mind must merge into the pure consciousness from which it rises. This is the secret of *Mantra-Japa* (meditation of divinity in words).

AUM is the universal mantra of divinity. It is the *Aum*—In (*AMIN*) of Muslims and *Aum—En* (*AMEN*) of Christians. It is I'm, *Aham* of Vedanta followers. It is Si—Aum (Sivam) of Siva followers. God is omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient. The Hindus breathe *AUMs* in plenty. They breathe out eight times *AUM* and breathe in seventeen times *AUM*. *OM* is God,s manifesting word. Word and thought are inseparable. The word is external and thought is internal.

Both are parts of the whole. Thought cannot be separated from word and word cannot be similarly separated from thought. Words and languages are the vehicles of expressions of man. The idea may be the same but language differs from country to country. But we need words to express an idea or thought. The sound of the word may be different, yet thought is the same.

"Although the relation between thought and word is perfectly national, yet it does not mean a rigid connection between one sound and one idea." The sound may be different. But the relationship between the sound and thought is a natural one. Both thought and sound signify a particular symbol. The symbol then becomes universal. "*OM*" signifies the Hindu symbol for the supreme being (the logos). This one word, *OM* is an expression of million words concerning the concept of God. *OM* is the symbol of God.

OM (*Aum*) is such a sound, which is the foundation of all sounds. It is the key note; '*A*' is the root sound, promoted without touching any part of the tongue or palate, '*M*' represents the last sound in the series, being pronounced by the closed lips, and the '*U*' rolls from the very root to the end of the sounding board of the mouth. Thus (*OM*) represents the whole phenomenon of sound-producing. It is the natural symbol, the matrix of all the various notes of music. It denotes the whole range and possibility of all the word sounds that can be produced.

OM is at the centre of the different conceptualization of God as contained in the Vedas. It has been able to signify all the various ideas about God. Monoist, dualist, mondualist, separatist and even atheist Hindus have taken up this symbol, '*OM*' for God. *OM* is the symbol of the aspiration of the Hindus. All the Hindus repeat this word while in meditation. Molecular vibration never ceases. When this Universe is destroyed, all the massive vibrations disappear; the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth, melt down; but the vibrations remain in the atoms. Each atom performs some function as the big words do. So this repetition of '*OM*' and thinking of its meaning, is keeping good company of mind. All Hindus study and then meditate on what they have studied. This light comes to them and Self becomes manifest.

Thus '*OM*' is the symbol of expressing the invisible by means of visible representation. To the Christian, the cross is a symbol of salvation because of its connection with the crucifixion. To many mystics, the circle is a symbol of eternity, because, like eternity, it has neither beginning nor end. The triangle represents the creative power out of which all things come into being, through which are sustained and to which they ultimately return. In Hinduism, the hexagon, the octagon and various other mystical diagrams are used to represent the deity. The Hindu devotee keeps one such diagram before him as he meditates, and through the law of association, the reference to the symbol enables him to continue his meditation without any break. Again, to a Hindu the triangle may mean the creative power, while to a Christian, the same thing may mean the trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

There are two types of symbols—geometric and anthromorphic. The geometric symbols are sometimes referred as "*Yantras*" (instruments). The anthromorphic symbol is the human symbol. It may be a physical symbol like the paintings or statues of divine personalities such as Buddha lost in meditation, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, Madona with the child Jesus in her arms, Ramakrishna and so on.

It may be a human relationship such as that of God as Father, Son, Brother, Mother, Friend, etc. Human relationship itself is a symbol whether an image is used or not.

Thus "*Aum*" is the most mysterious monosyllable sound known to the Hindus. The Hindu conception of the word, '*OM*' is thus explicitly explained by one authority: "As long as there has been a Hindu faith the Power of sound has been recognized in the sacred word. In that word lie all potencies, for the sacred word expresses the one and latent being, every power of generation, of preservation and of destruction . . . . . Therefore was it never to be sounded save when the mind was pure, when the mind was tranquil, when the life was noble."

This mystic word, which is always pronounced with extreme reverence, suggests an obvius analogy to that ineffable and mysterious Hebrew word, "Jehovah."

"*OM*" is used even today in a more affirmative sense by the Hindus. It is used in almost all religious and social ceremonies. "*OM*" in one interpretation signifies the TRIUNE functionaries—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—all three conceived together as one being.

According to *Manu Smriti*, the three letters, *A*, *U*, *M*, constituting "*OM*" are milked out of the three Vedas—*Rig*, *Yajur* and *Sama*—by Prajapati and as such they represent the quintessence of the three original vedic *canons*. Even the Buddhists and Jainiss freely use the term "*OM*" in their ritualistic practices as the Hindus do in their vedic rites.

IV

GAYATRI MANTRA (SEED WORD)

The next great *mantra* that the Hindus meditate upon is the Gayatri Mantra of the Vedas. Every vedic Hindu is obliged to chant *Gayatri*. It is the national *mantra* of the Hindus.

OM BHOOR BHUVAH SWAH, TAT SAVITUR VARENYAM,
BHARGO DEVESYA DHEEMAHI, DHIYO YO NA PRACHODAYAT,
(*Yaju* :36 : 3)

Translation :

"Thou O Supreme Lord, the source of Existences,
Intelligence and Bliss: The Creator of the Universe:
May we prove worthy of thy choice and acceptance:
May we meet thy glorious grace: May Thou vouch—safe an unerring guidance to our intellects and may we follow thy lead into Righteousness."

The Christians too have their Lord's prayer:
"Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth,
As it is in heaven,
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive our trespasses as we forgive
those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the
power, and the glory, and
for ever, Amen"

V

THE EFFICACY OF MANTRAS

These famours "*Mantras*" which the Hindus think so much of, are nothing more than prayers or consecrated formulas; but they are considered so powerful that they can, as the Hindus say, "enchain the power of Gods themselves."

Mantras are used for invocation, for evocation or spell. They may be either preventive or destructive or beneficient or malaficient, salutory or harmful. In fact, there is no effect that they are not capable of producing.

Through them an evil spirit can be made to take possession of anyone, or can be exercised. They can inspire love or hate; they can cause an illness or cure it, induce death or preserve life or cause destruction to a whole family.

These are *Mantras* which are infallible for all those and many other things besides. Fortunately, one mantra can counteract the effect of another; the stronger neutralizing the weaker.

An example for the efficacy of *Mantras* is taken from the well-known Hindu poem, "*Brahmothara-Kanda*", composed in honour of Lord Shiva:

"Dasarha, the king of Mathura, having married Kalavati, daughter of the king of Varanasi, was warned by the princess on their wedding night that he must not take advantage of his rights as her husband, because of the *mantras* of the five letters, which she had learnt had so purged and purified her that any man who ventured upon any familiarity with her would do so at the risk of his life, unless he had been previously cleansed from all defilements through the same meditation. Being his wife, she could not teach him this "*Mantra*," because of doing so, she would become his *Guru* (Master) and consequently his superior.

The next day, the husband and wife both went in quest of the great *Rishi* (saint) or penitent, They both had a holy dip into the waters of the Ganges. The couple thus became free from defilement by having a bath in the holy waters of the Ganges.

Thus prepared, the couple returned to the *Rishi* (penitent) who made the husband sit down on the ground facing the east and having seated himself by his side, but facing the west, he whispered these two words into his ear, "*Namah Shivrya.*" This means, "All hail to Lord Shiva and is the *Mantra* of the five letters (*NA—MA SI—VA—YA*).

Scarcely had the king Dasarha heard these marvelleous words when a flight of crows was seen issuing from different parts of his body, which flew away and disappeared; these crows being nothing more or less than the sins which the prince had previously committed. Thus the king and his wife were purified. And they lived happily together hereafter for a great many years. The most famous efficacious *mantra* for taking away sins, whose power is so great that the very Gods tremble at it, is that which is called the "*Gayatri*."

"*Gayatri*" is so ancient that the Vedas themselves were born from the Gayatri. Only a Brahmin has the right to recite the *Gayatri mantra* He must prepare himself beforehand by other prayers and by the most profound meditation. He must always repeat it in a low voice, and take the greatest care that he is not overheard by an untouchable or even his Brahmin wife, particularly at the time when she is in a state of uncleanliness (menstrual period):

"Let us worship the light of God,
Greater than thou, O Sun, who can
So well guide our understanding.
The wise man always considers this
Sun the supreme manifestation of the divinity."

OR

"Let us worship the supreme light
of the Sun, the God of all things, who
can so well guide our understanding
Like an eye suspended in the vault of heaven"

VI

THE CULTURAL SYMBOLS OF HINDUISM

Among the formless symbols of Hindu God, *SHIVA LINGAM* is the most dominating link between man and God. What is *Shiva Lingam* ? Shiva in formless (*Arup*) aspect is represented by *Shivalinga*. This representation of Shiva in *linga* is an object of great veneration throughout India. *Shivalinga* is the symbol of fertility and life. All Hindus worship *Shivalinga*. *Shivalinga* is India's unity in diversity.

It may appear to be obscure to the western thinking mind. But *Shivalinga* is mere a "*linga*" or Phallus; often it is in the form of a phallus placed in the *yoni* (female genetive organ) of nature (Parvati), conceived as female and the progenitrees of species.

The *yoni* stands for the material cause and the *linga* for the efficient cause. Together they stand for the primordial cause as a whole. They together represent the absolute with properties, but without property differentiation.

The Lord Shiva declares:

"Yes' the *Lingam* is I Myself, and I ordain that all men and women shall offer to it henceforth their worship and sacrifice. Those who honour me under this symbol of the "*Lingam*" shall obtain, without fail, the object of all their desires and a place in heaven.

"I am the supreme being and so is my lingam. To render to it the honours due to a God is an action of the highest merit. The bell tree (Margosa) is, of all trees, the one I love the best. If any one wishes to obtain my favours, and the fruits thereof hear once more, evil spirits, my subjects: he must fast on the fourteenth day of the moon in the month of *Chaitra* (February—March) in honour of my *lingam* and on the following night, do "*puja*" and present to me leaves of the margosa tree, shall have certain place in heaven (Kailash—the abode of Lord Shiva).

"Hear yet again, evil spirits: My subjects, if you desire to become virtuous, learn what are the benefits to be derived from honour more rendered to my *Lingam*. Those who make images of it with earth or cow dung or do *puja* to it under this formless form, shall be rewarded; those who make it in stone shall receive seven times more reward and shall never behold the prince of darkness"; those who make it in silver shall receive seven times more reward than the last honoured; and those who make it in gold shall be seven times more meritorious still.

"Let my priests go and teach those truths to men and women and compel them to embrace the worship of my *lingam*." The *lingam* is Shiva Himself; it is white, it is black. It has three eyes and five faces; it is arranged in a tiger's skin.

The *lingam*, the Hindus believe, existed before the world was created, and it is the origin and the beginning of all beings. It disperses all fears and grants the worshipper all his desires. Without any doubt this symbol of lingam contains allegorical meaning.

In the typical form, Shiva represents disintegration. He has many symbols of death on him (*Tamaguna*); the cremation ground where he dances, his garland of human skulls, ornates of cobra snake, poison in his throat, etc. are some of them. The digit of the moon he wears on his head—gear denotes "Time", the great destroyer His weapons, the battle axe (*parasu*) also shows the idea of destruction. The drum beat echoes the last breath of life.

Shiva is the Almighty *par excellence* of the Hindus, Hence Yogic symbolization is very pronounced in the form. The three eyes represent the Sun, the Moon and Fire and the Ganges flowing in his head represents the nector of million lotus and the small portion of it that oozes out through a strand of hair. His vehicle is the bull and the principal weapon he holds is the Trident or *Trisula* (Trimurti).

The Hindus worship Lord Shiva both in formless as *lingam* or form having face, hands, head etc., These symbols of God denote the qualities of God. They are more than material objects, as they approximately seem to be. They are very often invested with one or more unnatural and impossible factors such as four heads, half animal body and so on.

VII

HINDU TRINITY (TRIMURTI)

The Hindu Trinity represents three principal divinities whom the Hindus acknowledge and understand. They are Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer).

The concept of Trinity signifies three powers : (i) of creation (ii) of preservation and (iii) of destruction. These are the attributes of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. respectively.

The Hindu Trinity has a very special emblem of Trident (*Trisula*) and sometimes joined together in a single body with three heads. It is under this form these three divinities assume the name of Trimurti (three heads in a single body) which represents the three attributes and the three powers of these attributes.

This concept of "*TRIMURTI*" is symbolical. Nothing in the world is created, preserved or evolved without the mutual agreement and approval of these three powers of the universe. The Hindus recognize "Trimurti" and worship without particular points of doctrine such a Vaishnivism or Shaivism. The Hindus pay equal respect to three God—head of Trinity. The Hindus worship this idol of Trimurti. But no idol can become an object of worship until it has been duly consecrated by a number of ceremonies and rituals. It is necessary first of all that the deity should be invoked; in order that it may come alive in the idol and be incorporated with it; and this must be done by a Brahmin priest. All objects of worship are destined to be consecrated on many occasions.

It is very difficult to trace the origin of Trimurti, in as much as the accounts of it do not agree. In some puranas, it is stated that the Trimurti sprang from a female source called, "*Adi—Shakti*" (the original power of nature) who gave birth to these three divinities united in a single body "*Satyam Sivam Sundaram*".

However, Trimurti is the symbolic representation of:

(i) Earth, (Soil)
(ii) Water, and
(iii) Fire.

Trimurti owes its origin to the mode of viewing objects; earth, water and fire —three divinities composing Trinity. The earth is the common mother of all things, animate and inanimate. Either they spring from her bossom or they live upon her in nature. She has, therefore, been regarded as the divine creator and holds the first rank in the opinion of the Hindus, who have made her their Brahma.

But what could the earth do without the help of water ? Without the dews and the rains which develop the seeds of her fertility she would remain barren, and would soon find herself bereft of every living creature.

It is water which gives life, preserves and causes to grow everything that has life or vegetates. It was, therefore, regarded as the divine preserver, that is to say, Vishnu.

Fire, in penetrating the other two elements, communicates to them a portion of its energy, develops their properties and brings everything in nature to that state of growth, maturity and perfection which would never be arrived at without it. But should it cease to act upon created things, everyone of them perishes. When it is in its free and visible state, this active agent of reproduction destroys by its irresistible power the bodies to whose composition it had before contributed, and it is to this formidable power that it owed its title of God—the destroyer, that is to say, Shiva.

By uniting the three elements in a simple body with three heads the founders of the Hindu theologists wished it to be understood that the harmony of the three elements was indispensable to the production and reproduction of all secondary bodies.

The Hindus attributed qualities to each of the divinities which compose the Trinity. These qualities are called *Satva*, *Raja*s, *Tamas*. *Satva* is the gentle and insinuating disposition; *rajas*, the irascible, furious, passionate; *tamas*, the dull, heavy and lethargic.

Thus Vishnu is endowed with '*Satva*', Shiva with '*Rajas*' and Brahma with '*Tamas*'. Again, these qualities are also applied to three elements: The earth, like Brahma heavy and indifferent by nature; the water, like Vishnu is insinuating and penetrating; fire like Shiva, is capable of destroying everything by its violence.

The quality of '*tamas*' and '*Rajas*' is no inherent in the earth that the Hindu astronomers often confound the two. Thus in a lunar eclipse, when the darkness of the earth intercepts the rays of the sun, they say that the "*Tamas-bimbam*", or the disc tamas, obscures by its shadow the disc of the moon.

The quality '*rajas*', characteristic of fire and represented under the form of Shiva, is ascribed in a special manner to that deity by the Hindu poets, and although the name of Shiva, which is commonly used signifies joy, the deity bears many other names which seem to show that he is no other than fire personified, such, for instance, is the name Jwala (the inflamed) under which he is well-known.

The quality '*Satva*', ascribed to Vishnu applies to water, which penetrates and insinuates itself intothe earth, rendering it fertile, for name of Vishnu significe one who penetrates everywhere. *Appu* (water) is a common enough name for this deity; but the commonest of all as Narayan that is to say, one who moves upon the waters.

From these expressions it is believed that the Hindus had from earliest times some knowledge of Trinity. These three Gods are but one. Shiva is the heart of Vishnu and Vishnu the heart of Brahma; it is one lamp with three lighted wicks. It is one God in three persons.

VIII

SALAGRAM-SHILA

The formless (*Salgram-Shila*) represents Vishnu in whom properties (*Gunas*) are conceived as present in an undifferentiated form. Similar iconic stone symbol for *Shakti* is also used.

The little stone is held in great honour throughout India. Brahmins consider it to be a metamorphosis of Vishnu and for this reason, they offer daily worship to it. It is a sort of fossilized shell, ammonite or nautilus, oval, striated, umbilicated and ornamented with "arborizations" or tree-like markings on the outside. The more there are of these tree-like markings, the more highly they are revered.

It is obligatory for every Brahmin to have one of these stones in his possession. They are handed down from father to son and are regarded as gift from God which must never be passed out of the family.

It is written in the *Atharva Veda* that any Brahmin's house in which there is no Salagram Shila is to be considered as impure as a cemetery and the food which is prepared in it is as unclean as a dog's vomit. Though the *Salagram* is looked upon as one of the metamorphoses of Vishnu, it partakes at the same time of the essence of all the other deities, and through it worship can be offered to all of them.

There is nothing more efficacious for the remission of sins, no matter how grievous they may be, than to possess some water in which he has been thus sanctified. He who always keeps such water in his house ensures thereby perpetual wealth and peace, he will not only obtain forgiveness of his sins, but he will also secure his happiness in the world; will always do what is right and after death will at once enjoy the delights of heaven. But before drinking this marvellous water he must not forget to address the following prayer to Lord Vishnu:

"Narayan, You are the ruler of the world,
it is your pleasure to offer blessings on
all created beings. I drink this water
in which your sacred feet have been worshipped;
I drink it that I may be cleansed from my sins;
Vouchsafe to pardon me, who am the greatest of sinners".

Salagram represents the formless form of the Absolute. It is a black egg-shapped object, the remains of fossilized ammonite, it has a golden streak within its cavity and is obtained from rivers, notably the Gandaki (from where the Ganges springs out).

This represents the primordial Golden Egg (*Hiraynagarbha*), the undifferentiated totality that consolidated itself out of the inert material cause (*Karanjala*), often wrongly translated as the "First Waters". It is out of the Egg that the whole universe becomes differentiated in course of time. This is homogenous, luminous, nebulous mass, out of which the universe has evolved in due course.

SWASTIKA

May the All-mighty God of infinite glory be auspicious to us. May the All-knowing Lord of the universe be of auspiciosness to us. May the All-powerful protector of the Universe being auspicious to us. Lord of Lords, the supreme being bring fortuneto us

—*Yajur Veda*: *52* : *19*

This (*Swastika*) symbol is the most sacred and ancient. At least for more than last 8000 years, it has been the most important mark of the Aryan (the Hindus) civilization and culture.

This symbol signifies an implied prayer for success, accomplishment and perfection, in every walk of life, under the guidance of the Almighty. It is found not only in India but in the Buddhist and other foreign countries.

All the Aryan scripts i.e. Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Siamese, Sinhalese, Roman, Greek, Latin, etc. are believed to have originated from the very symbol, Swastika.

"*OM*" is the symbol of idea that God is infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite, all-existence, all intelligence and all-bliss. Another important symbol of the Hindus is "*SHREE*". Shree is considered to be the mark of preserving energy of the Supreme Being. All Hindu males prefix "*Shree*" to their names while the Hindu females "*Shreemati*" to their name.

All these symbols significantly convey the basic fact that Hindu God is one and only one God. God is one. He is the creator of the whole universe. He is all that was in the past and also is in the and all that will be in the future; also He Lords over the whole universe and He is pure bliss by the very nature—He is the highest Supreme Being. All Hindus worship Him! And the Hindus who have developed the capacity of understanding with mind controlled and always pure and verily they reach that goal from which they are not born again. These symbols help them with the realization and understanding of the ultimate reality.

X

HINDU CULTURE IS BASED ON THE VEDAS

The Vedas provide knowledge of '*Brahman*' (Supreme Being). The Hindus become purified and fit to enquire into the highest realm of Brahman either by dint of knowledge (wisdom) of the Vedas or through work (by means of selfless labour as well as sacrificial rituals) as prescribed in the Vedas. Thus the Vedas are the nucleus of the Hindu Culture.

The Vedas are divided into two parts:

(a) '*Karma Kanda*' devoted to work, and
(b) '*Jnana Kanda*' devoted to knowledge

The Upanishads, the latter part of the Vedas, which are also called the Vedanta, meaning "the end of the Vedas, comprise the sections dealing with knowledge.

The *Karma Kanda* is roughly divided into three parts:

(i) The *Mantras* of hymns addressed in adoration of *Brahman* or God in His various aspects; a collection of these hymns being called Samhita;

(ii) The Brahmanas written in prose describing the sacrificial rituals and including precepts and religious duties; and

(iii) The Aranyakas of forest treatise which supplant the external rituals with symbolic meditations;

Prof. Deussen has declared that this division of the Vedas is based on the principle of dividing life into '*Ashram*', (stage of life). According to the Vedic teachings the general plan of life is successively, student life, when a boy lives with his teacher and receives both religious and secular instructions. The youth is trained in self-contol and acquire such virtues as chastity, truthfulness, faith and self-surrender. The next stage is*Grahasthya* or married life. The chief instruction for this stage of life is to maintain the family ritualistic sacrifices and honour the household God of Fire as contained in the Brahmanas. Then comes the stage of retirement or *Vanaprastha* when he is no longer required to practise the rituals but is instructed to follow the Aranyakas' symbolic meditation. Finally, he comes to the stage of life when he renounces the whole world and is not bound within the confine of work or desire but is wholly dedicated to acquiring the knowledge of *Brahman* (the ultimate reality).

A Hindu may enter in his early life the stage of renunciation which is called monasticism. At the time of admission into a monastry he passes through a vedic ritual. He always meditates upon the truths of the Upanishads—the final knowledge of God. Even today, the modern Hindus retain this highest ideal of morality, character and commitment of monastry life. Thus the influence of the Vedas among the Hindus has been perpetuated throughout the ages. The laws which regulate the social, legal, domestic and religious customs and rites of the Hindus even to the present day are said to be put more systematized memories of old vedic teachings, and are held to be obligatory on their authority. Every Brahamin repeats daily the vedic prayer called the *Gayatri mantras*. The vedic hymns are addressed to many Gods, yet, each of these God is at times sublimated into a single universal conception which possesses the character of the infinite personal God of the Universe. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Rigveda. Swami Vivekananda declared:

"And it is a grand explanation one that has given the theme to all subsequent throughts in India, and one that will be the theme of the whole world of religion—*EKAM SATVIPRA BAHUDHA VEDANTI* (They call it Indra, Varuna). That which exists is one, sages call it by various names".

Even in modern times Ramakrishna re-echoed this truth that God is one without a Second:

"There is but one God, but endless are His names and endless the aspects in which He may be regarded. Call Him by any name, and worship Him in any aspect that pleases you! You are sure to find Him. As many religions so many paths to reach the same truth. You will advance yourself in whatever way you may meditate upon him or recite his holy name. The cake made with sugar-candy will taste equally sweet, whether it be hely straight or obliquely when you eat it".

The vedic saints did not rest with the concept of a monotheistic God. God is described as "*TAD EKAM*"—That ONE—neither masculire nor feminine, but neuter—THAT.

The truth is that the infinite names, forms, attributes and expressions of God are but different ways of viewing a single truth—one existence: "*EKAM SAT VIPRA BAHUDHA* VADANI"—Truth is one; sages call it by various names. For verity is he transcendental. "Personal God is the reading of the impersonal by the human mind", says Swami Vivekananda.

A Hindu, when taught to love and worship God, loves and worships Him as personal Impersonal.

In this connection Max Muller says pertinently "Whatever is the age when co-relation of our *Rigveda Samhita* was finished, it was before the age when the conviction was formed that there is but One, One Being, neither male nor femabel—a Being raised high above all the conditions and limitations of personality and of human nature, and nevertheless, the Being that was really meant by all such names as Indra, Agni, nay, even by the name of Prajapati Lord of creatures. In fact, the Vedic poets had arrived at a concept of the God-head which was reached once more by some of the Christian philosophers of Alexandria, but which even at present is beyond the reach of many who call themselves Christians".

Apart from the consideration of rituals, the Brahmanas lay emphasis upon duties and conduct as well. "Side by side with its insistence in the outer", writes S. Radhakrishnan. "There was also the emphasis on inner purity. Truth, godliness honour to parents, kindness to animals, love of man, abstinence from theft, murder and adultery, were inculcated as the essentials of a good life". The Hindus began to enquire into the inner realm of man from time immemorial. The katha Upanished composed far earlier than twentyfive centuries turned the outward functioning of senses inward and made great discoveries. It is an enquiry into the *Brahman*. The Hindus seemed to have everything to satisfy them, so they embarked on spiritual Odyssey. It is a psychological experiment. It can only be carried out in a laboratory of one's mind. It is a personal feeling. There are also certain injunction which everyone must follow. The Hindus owe debts both to the world and to God and certain duties must be discharged in repayment of these debts. These debts are five in number:

"(a) Those to the gods,
(b) Those to the saints
(c) Those to the pitris or manes
(d) Those to the men, and
(e) Those to lower creations"

The Hindus repay debts to God by offering sacrifices, to the saints by inculcating devotion in hearts for their greatness, to the pitris by praying for them; to men, by love and doing kind deeds; and to the lower creations by offering them food and drink.

When the Hindus partake of their daily meals, they would offer parts of it regularly to gods, pitris, etc.

These debts must be paid by the Hindus. No merit is, therefore, acquired by the Hindus in repaying these debts. On the other hand, by neglecting them, they degenerate below the worth of a human being. These duties as said in the Brahmanas must not be performed with the aim of getting selfish ends. They are to be observed for the sake of purifying hearts as they are obligatory duty of a righteous Hindu.

The Aranyakas lay far greater emphasis on retiring into one's own self than on the intrinsic value of external acts. Listen to Swami Vivekananda: "Thus we find that the minds of these ancient Aryan thinkers had begun a new theme. They found out that in the external world no search would give an answer to their question. So they fell back upon this other method and according to this they were taught that these desires of the senses, have caused a veil to come between themselves and the truth, and that this cannot be removed by any ceremonial...they seemed to declare—look not for the truth in any religion, it is here in the human soul, the emporium of all knowledge, the mine of all existence . ..and they found out step by step that which is inside . . .

Just at first it was a search after the Devas (Gods), the bright ones, and then it was the origin of the Universe, and the very same search is getting another name more philosophical, clearer—the unity of all things, knowing which everything else become known"[1]:

XI
TEACHINGS OF THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishads are compared to a cow, Sri Krishna to a milkman and the Gita to the milk yielded by the cow. Sri Krishna milked out the Gita from the Upanishads.

The world 'Upanishads', is composed of "*Up a*" (near) and "*ni shad*" (to sit). From "sitting near" the Teacher, the term came to mean the secret or esoteric doctrine confided by the master to his best and favourite pupils. There are one hundred and eight of these discourses, composed by various saints and sages between 800 and 500 B.C. The Upanishads have impressed the Hindus as the profoundest of thoughts for simple and essential reality underlying the superficial multiplicity of ideas. The Upanishads have glorified soul as immortal:

'If now, Sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I now thereby be immortal ?

"No, No", of immortality there is no hope through wealth".

"What should I do with that through which I may not be immortal ?

The Upanishads explain the difficult phenomenon of man's quest for immortality. "Whence are we born, where do we live, and whither do we go ? "The Hindus are not interested in becoming a millionaire but would like to get these answers to their questions. In the *Maitri Upanishad* you will see, a king abandoning his kingdom and going into the forest to practise austerities, clear his mind for understanding, and solve the riddle of the universe. The Hindu thought is underlying in this passage:

---

[1] The complete works of Vivekananda.

"Sir, what is the good of enjoyment of desires in this ill-smelling, unsubstantial body, which is a conglomerate of bones, skin, muscles, marrow, flesh, semen, blood, mucus, tears, rheum, faces, urine, wind, bile and phlem ?

What is the good of enjoyment of desires in this body, which is afflicted with desires, anger, covetousness, delusion, fear, despondency, envy, separation from the desirable, union with the undesirable, hunger, thirst, senility, death, disease, sorrow and the like ? And we see that this whole world is decaying like these gnats, these mosquitoes, like grass, and these trees that arise and perish. Among other things there is the drying up of great oceans, the falling away of mountain-peaks, the deviation of the fixed pole star, the submergence of the earth . . . In this sort of cycle of existence what is the good of enjoyment of desires, when after a man has fed upon them, there is seen repeatedly his return here to the earth."

The Upanishads remain to the Hindus what the *New Testment* has been to the Christians—a noble creed occasionally practised and generally revered.

Schopenhauer said:

"In the whole world, there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life—it will be the solace of my death".

The Upanishads are as old as Homer, and as modern as Kant. The teaching of the Upanishads are relative to the condition of the aspirant's mind. The Hindus bind no difficulty in harmonising these positions. As the Hindus consider themselves embodied beings and they live in a world, and this world has its ruler. In other words, so long as they are persons, the personal God exists for them. But when the Hindus transcend the limitations of their personality, which the Upanishads assure them they can if they follow their directions, the personal God as well as World vanishes for them, and only the impersonal God remains and they are one with that. Then there is no more duality but Existence Absolute. It is in this sense that the soul of man is one with *Brahman*[1] not that it, with all its limitations, is at any given moment identical with Brahmans in all His aspects. "The clay mouse is not the clay elephant; but dissolved in water, both become clay." Naturally, therefore, all the power, knowledge, and bliss of God exist potentially in the soul. If they were not there they would never be manifested, as they do in the perfected saint.

[1] *Brahman* of the Upanishads is both personal and impersonal (*Nirguna*). *Brahman* or *Atman* is "the Lord of all, omniscent, the internal Ruler. He is the cause of all; from Him indeed all beings proceed and in Him they merge". Brahman is the ruler of the Universe. He projects it, maintains it, and dissolves it at the end. He guides the destinies of the multitudions beings that dwell in it. He rewards the good according to their merits, leading them to prosperity or liberation (salvation), and He also punishes the wicked according to their misdeeds. He is called "*Ishrain*" (God) whose boy is the sum-total al lbodies in the universe, and whose mind is the aggregate of all minds.

The moment its self-hypnotism is gone, the divinity that is always latent in it would manifest itself.

So the Hindus try to "know that one Atman alone, and give up all other talk. This is the bridge to immortality." (MU. U. 11 : 2. 5)

The impersonal aspect of Brahman is devoid of all attributes. "He is the eternal witness, He is Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute. The impersonal God can only be indicated by the negation of all attributes. He alone shining, everything shines after, through His lustre and all stars, moon or sun shines. He is neither gross nor minute, neither short nor long, neither redness nor moisture, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor ether, neither taste nor smell, unattached non-luminous, without eyes or ears, without the vocal organ or mind, without the vital force or mouth, nor a measure, and without Interior or exterior. He does not eat anything, nor is He eaten by anybody." (Br. U. III. 8. 8)

And with this impersonal God the individual soul is fundamentally identical. There are apparent differences but essential unity :

Two birds of beautiful plumage (the soul and god), who are friends and always joined together, clung to the same tree (the body). One of them (the soul) eats sweet (and bitter) fruits (experiences the results of its past work) but the other only watches without eating. Buried in the self-same-tree (wholly identified with the body), the infinite being (Prusha,[6] the soul) is overwhelmed by his importance and suffers. But when he beholds the other, the Lord, the adorable one, and the glory of the world), as His, he is free from grief. Nothing short of a realisation of identity can banish all grief and misery, for a second entity indeed causes fear (M. U. U. III. 1 : 2 & Br. U. 1. 4 : 2)"

PLATO AND UPANISHADS :STRIKING SIMILARITIES

In both the Platonic text and in the Upanishads, an intense poetic cur-rent runs throughout.

The Upanishads are seen as celestial poetic gardens of the Sanskrit language-the poetry of which is the vehicle of the most profound thought.

Both Plato and the Upanishads have compared "soul" to a charioter. The Katha Upanishad says :

"Know the (individual) Self as the master of the chariot and the body as the chariot. Know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as verily the bridle."

It is clear that the image of the "vehicle" is used by both Plato and the Upanishads when referring to the relationship between soul and body.

The other testual similarity between Plato and the Upanishads is that both have used the sleeping state as a metaphor to signify the condition of man lacking philosophical elevation and enlightenment. In the "Menon" Plato calls such a men a "somnambulist chasing ghosts" and in the Katha Upanishad, Yama shouts to Nachiketa : "Arise ye! Awake ye !

Similarly, the light and its primary source, the sun, is often used by both Plato

---

1. *Purshs*—God eternal.

and the Upanishads as an image to "denote divinity or the ultimate priniple." This is quite in line with the well-known Aryan traditation.

Both have rejected sense perception as a source of valid information. In this connexion, Plato's "Republic and the Svetasvatara Upanishad bear striking resemblance. Both have rejected the empirical knowledge and both have advocated a turn towards inner perception.

SHADOW OF REALITY

The fundamental teaching in the Upanishads is that the ambient world is "illusory'' (Maya). Its cause is said to be "Avidya" (ignorance). In Plato's metaphysics, the empirical world is thought of as a shadow of reality.

Another striking similarity which was the acceptance of the concept of reincarnation or transmigration of souls. Pythagoras was the first in the Greek world to teach reincarnation. This doctrine was further developed and elaborated by Plato. In the "Pheedo", Socrates often refers to reincarnation when he speaks about the immortality of the soul.

Reincarnation or "Samsara" is referred to in Katha, Maitri and Brhadaranyaka Upanishads. Says the Katha Upanishad : "Man decays and dies like corn, and emerges again like corn."

Finally, caste system not only prevailed in India. Plato also acceptedi t. In "Republic", Plato has divided society into three classes : Guardians or Rulers, Warriors and Craftsmen, Peasants etc.

The Upanishads have divided society into : Brahmins : Kshatriyas ; and Vaishyas. The fourth caste, the "Shudras" or "manual labourers", was never considered to be on an equal footing with the other three. In the Indian social castes, the Brahmins have a precedence, while Plato was inclined to place the priests first.

XII

HINDU GOD IS ONE WITHOUT A SECOND

"All texts of the Vedanta declare, indeed, Brahman known as Naryana to be only of one form—as the mine of countless auspicious qualities and devoid of the slightest trace of all imperfection. But some (of them) do so by way of referring to His being qualified by the attributes of Omniscence, Sovereignty over all, rulership of all from within, beauty, and magnanimity. Others, by way of referring to His being negatively characterised by the absence of imperfection. Such negative characterizations include freedom from sin, being devoid of grief, having no material body and so on. Others, again, by way of His being such as to be beyond the range of speech and mind and so on in order to teach us the extreme difficulty of understanding Him.

Yet others by way of His being are only without a second, as the object to be pursued through the renunciation of all else. Still others, by way of His being the self of all, in as much as He confers on all else being activity and knowability. In these and many other ways, they teach about the supreme person. Therefore, confused minds cut the Veda into pieces, failing to hold on to the same form of Brahman in all texts".

It is God who has taken, as it were, all the forms that we see. This is explained in one of the Upanishads on the analogy of Fire and Wind. Just as Fire or Wind enters the world and assumes various shapes and comfigurations, even so the inner self of all beings takes on several forms and yet is not exhausted by them. So it is difficult to see God in everything. In fact, to realize the self as all is the highest of spiritual experience. So, as a discipline that will eventually lead to the goal, one is asked to see the face of God in whichever thing that has prowess, splendour and rectitude. Illustrating this truth in the tenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna identifies himself with the best of every kind, e.g. the Himalayas among the mountains, the Ganges among the rivers, and Arjuna among the Pandavas. The great mountains and the mighty rivers, majestic trees and fine animals, heroic men and women—in fact, all things that have excellence, thus become objects of veneration. When the Hindus worship these or the idols in the temples, they all are aware that it is to God that they really offer worship. It is wrong, therefore, to characterize Hinduism as an idolatory religion. The idols are symbols of the invisible spirit. It is after the devotees have invoked the presence of God therein that they become sacred objects of worship. What the Hindus adore is one God in many Gods:

> Thou art woman; Thou art man; Thou art the
> youth and also the maiden; Thou as an old man
> totterst with a stick; being born thou
> standest facing all directions".

What Maxmuller characterizes as the henothism of the Vedas, viz, the worshipping of each divinity in turn, as the occasion demands, is really a tendency towards a philosophical henothism. The Hindu mind is averse to assigning an unalterable or rigidly fixed form or name to the deity. Hence it is that in Hinduism they have innumerable good forms and countless divine names. And, it is a truth that is recognized by all Hindus that Obeisance offered to any of these forms and names reaches the one supreme God. "God who is one real, sages name variously". Thus Hinduism conceives only one God : "*EKAM SAD—VIPRA BAUHDHA VADANTI*" (only one—theologians call it by many names) is a well-known vedic text. To the Hindus, God is without qualities and hence beyond any conception of mind. If that is the position, what are these idols and what do they represent ? The idols are a mere aid, though a very necessary medium. for the Hindus to conceive and meditate upon the Absolute one. Further, they are meant for those whose inner ability to grasp the abstract thinking is not fully realized. In other words, these idols of God represent a symbol of concretization of the abstract or zeroing down to reality—the Absolute is beyond comprehension by human mind. In order to comprehend the Absolute in the wave-length of the individual worshipper, the Hindus have introduced

5286

the image of God (*vigraha*). This symbol of God is an aid for the Hindus to grasp the underlying abstract form or the spirit of God.

The Absolute real one is beyond qualities (*Gunas*). It is in fact non-existence. "It is the same from which everything originates, the earth on which everything manifests and the goal to which everything resolves".

He is without qualities. So He cannot be transformed into a phenomenon of the universe; the phenomenal universe can be comprehended only as a projection or better still, a function in the mathematical sense of the absolute. This functional relationship of the Brahman has two opposing phases—both operating continuosly and simultaneously. The first one is additive or integrative in the nature, whereby subtle or finest material particles (anus)—something like the "ions" of modern science, or imponderable homogenous matter, become differentiated into ponderable matters by a sort of condensation, as it were. This is the creative phase and answers to the anabolic process of modern sciences. This is the reverse process, dissolution ("*laya*"—destruction) by which it assumes manifested state. This is equivalent to the Katabolic process of modern science. These two processes are ever going on in nature; what human senses recognize as the phenomenal universe is simply the resultant of the above two processes.

The quality underlying the integrating or creative process is known as "*Rajaguna*"; the quality underlying the disintegration (*laya*—destruction) process is termed as "*Tamaguna*" and the quality attached to the phenomenal plase of nature or the property subserving phenomenal existence is "*Satya Guna*". It should be remembered that these qualities or '*Gunas*' do not belong to the Absolute, but only to nature ("*Parakriti*"). These qualities of nature will also be seen in man who is also a part of nature.

In man, such of the qualities as aid to preserve the universe as a whole are regarded as *Satyaguna* factors; there that aid to create affection as "*Rajaguna*" factors, and these that tend to produce disintegration as *Tamaguna* factors.

In the realm of nature, these three qualities are in complex form, one is dominant over the other two qualities or factors. It may be observed that qualities are also identified as various colours—white (for the truth), red or gold (for affection and love) black or blue (for destruction) and mixtures for mixed qualities. This knowledge will enable one to understand the meaning of colours ascribed to idols, their costumes, etc.

Nature is divided into two parts :

(a) Life factor and (b) material factor. With its eight elements, of the eight elements of the material factor, the first five are of the five states of Existence of matter (*Panchbutas* and the last three are mind (i) the faculty of comprehension (ii) intellect (*budhi*) or reasoning, and (iii) egoism. As none of the last three qualities are possible without the material body, these are also included in the material world.

Thus the qualities both for the worshipper and the worshipped (deity or idol) are conceived for their worship. The most appropriate deity or idol will be one having qualities identical with those of the worshipper. There is one other factor also to be taken into account in determining the suitable idol or image for a !given worshipper. The type of emotional attachment to his fellowman varies with each man; one may be more attached to one's mother, another to father, a third to wife, a fourth to friends and so on. Six important forms of natural attachment or emotional relationship (*bhavas*) are recognized by the Hindus.

	Name of Bhavas (emotional attachment)	Type of emotional relationship	Example
1.	*Santa Bhava* (peace)	Man to his creator	Saint to Vishnu
2.	*Daya Bhava* (kindness)	Servent to his master	Hanuman to Rama
3.	*Sakhaya Bhava* (friendship)	Friend to his friend	Arjuna to Krishna
4.	*Vatsalya Bhava* (affection)	Parent to his child	Yasuda to Gopala
5.	*Aptya Bhava* (Reverence)	Child to his/her parent	Markendeya to Devi
6.	*Kanta or Madhuva* Bhava (Love)	Lover to his or her beloved.	Radha to Krishna

There are other *Bhavas* such as *Satru* (enmity) *bhava*, which cannot ordinarily be used, they are described to explain salvation (*moksha*) granted to such characters as Ravna.

It is the human desire to satisfy these *bhavas* and as it is essential for a man to find his Almighty God as having such qualities and emotional relationship corresponding to or identical with those of the worshipper. This necessitates a large number of deities for selection of man and woman. This may be the basic reason why the Hindus worship different images of God apparently a plurality of God.

Hence the large number of images of Gods and Goddesses (*vigrahas*) are conceived on a rational basic to meet the specific needs of man. In the former days, the selection of Almighty God was made by the spiritual *Guru* (Teacher) under whom the Hindu student served a long course of apprenticeship, during which the Guru had opportunities of studying the qualities and the emotional relations (*bhavas*) and other spiritual characteristics and was, therefore, in a better position to select an image of God to suit emotional and spiritual bent of the student.

Generally speaking, men may be grouped into three categories :

(i) those in whom the faculty of intellect and reasoning is dominant;
(ii) those in whom emotion plays the decisive role, and
(iii) those who are controlled by other impulses and instincts.

To those who belong to the first category of abstract thinking is easy, and they find satisfaction only in rational philosophy. This category is naturally a small group. For them ritualistic emotional religion is not the ideal. The last category is composed of children and those with childish mentality. They cannot think, nor are their emotions developed. They can be trained to follow a routine which is in due course, may help them to enjoy a form of vegetative satisfaction, to borrow a term from biology. As children grow up and acquire emotional factors and capacity to think, the permanent members of the group are few and limited to those of low mental capacity.

The bulk of humanity lies between these two categories forming the second or intermediary group. As the emotion predominates, they are also capable of abstract thinking, but to a limited extent; and most of them would also require material and mechanized measures to stimulate their emotions to the desired strength. The emotional way of realizing God is for them; and the images of God are designed to satisfy the needs of this group. The most important thing to understand Hinduism is that everything taught is not intended for everybody. There is a definite question of suitability or competency to worship the deity. The greatness of Hinduism lies in this fact that it supplies forms, methods and measures to suit all possible category of humanity at their own level of understanding.

The Westerners usually mock at the Hindus worshipping the cow, the monkey or the serpent God. What the Westerners do not know is that the Hindus do not worship the object of worship (monkey or serpent) but the quality of the devotion, the quality of faith which they bring to the object or thing. In fact, they worship God. This counts. The Hindus have the belief in the divine essence of man. It is this which is attributed to the quality of faith.

How can a Hindu be religious with a variety of Gods ? the Westerners ask. It is in fact not the God that they worship that counts. It is the quality of their devotion to faith. The Hindus do not look at the monkey-God as monkey. To the Hindus it is God. The monkey represents the quality of devotion and self-surrender to the Lord, Rama. It is the cross for the Christians as the symbol of sacrifice. It is the wheel of *Dharma* for the Hindus. It is the crescent moon for the Muslims.

It is the faith and devotion that counts—the Hindus live up to it as an experience. The Hindus are the people of faith and devotion. They want to attain divinity in this life. The Hindus are not satisfied by material living from sensation. This is animality. What about conscience ? What about higher mind ? What about aspirations for beauty, love, calm and bliss ?. It is the fundamental aspiration of a Hindu: He desires love. He desires to be loved. He longs for beauty. He wants to accelerate a state of mind what is called "*Ananda*" (bliss).

What is Bliss ? It is a quality. It is the radiation or reflection of the spirit in man. This is what the Hindus believe. It is far away from greed or anger, wrath or fear that limits the human destiny. It is a transformation of animal instincts and it transcends into a divine manifestation of whole life's attitude. It is embedded in the Hindu faith. And because of this faith, the Hindus are not prepared to accept the materialistic view of life. In Hindu faith the corner stone is devotion, love, non-violence and the supremacy of morality. The Westerners laugh at the Hindus for their worshipping of the cow. It is the glorious manifestation of their love for the animal. The Hindus are alive to their environment in which they live. They have respect for the flora and fauna. They believe in the ecological balance of creation.

The Hindus believe "I am non-violent". The world will give up the confrontation and hostility. It is the essence of supremacy of moral law which more is as inevitable as the law of gravitation. The Hindus stand for a collective mind and character of their own. The scale of human values viewed by the Westerners include material programme and standard of living, good food, housing and comfortable living. This can turn into a grief when the sense of moral responsibility of the individual is lacking. The Hindus stand for an ideal of high moral standard and character. It is their personal faith, the spiritual quality. Hinduism has not grown fat on the material comforts of life. The Hindus have contributed whatever little it could to the cause of humanity. It is the culture of the Hindus. And it is India.

XIII

WHAT IS HINDU RELIGION ?

Hindu religion is that which binds one back to the origin or the fountain head. But man's mind or intellect cannot be expected to know the great unknowable which is its very source. Hindu religion as distinguished from other religions is essentially a mysterious process by which the mind loses itself in this great beyond……. Hindu religion is that indescribable realization of the unknowable where all worldly distinctions, the body and mind, time and space together with all that is contained therein, this world and all others, are washed clean off into what no words can reach. Any systematic attempt leading to the above-mentioned goal is Hindu religion in its essence.

An Aryan (Hindu) who is cultured, gentle, noble and virtuous follows ten principles of Hindu religion :

Forbearance
Forgiveness
Suppression of internal and external enemies
Non-stealing
Purity
Control of senses
Discretion
Knowledge
Truthfulness, and
Non-anger

All these external virtues taken together, constitute Hindu religion. The Hindu God, though invisible (like ether), stands as if divided among beings. That knowable substance is the sustainer of all beings, destroyer and creator.

It is the perceiver of all sense-objects, though devoid of all senses, Though unattached and attributeless, God is the sustainer of all and enjoyer of the three modes of "*Prakriti*". That God is without and within all beings and constitutes both animate and inanimate creation by reason of His subtlety. God is incomprehensible. He is both at hand and far away.

In Hindu religion everything is under the sway of death and decay. All relations are chains of bondage. Enjoyments are man's fatal diseases and desires are a tantalizig mirage. So the Hindu philosophers ask "Is there any better state of existence which may be free from suffering, ignorance and grief and be full of unconditional joy ? Yes! He who desires to cross the painful ocean of worldly life, which is full of the crocodiles of lust, anger, greed and infatuation, should catch hold of the *Bhagavad-Gita* which has the description of action, devotion and wisdom as it oars. it will easily take him to the land of liberation (*Nirvana*)

The peace of the eternal lies near to those wise men who know themselves, who are disjoined from desire and passion, subdued in nature of subdued thought, for such persons it does not matter whether they stay at home and practise karma-yoga or dwells in the jungles and practise *Jnana-Yoga*.

XIV

THE REAL ONE HAS MANY NAMES

The Hindus realise this truth and allow the widest freedom in matters of faith and worship. The Westerners are simply amazed by the unending varieties of their worship and faith. But they have failed to realize the fundamentals of Hinduism, which are: "As Many Minds, So Many Faiths." The Upanishads declare that just as cows, which, are of varied hues yield the same white milk, all the different paths lead to the same goal.

"Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them ; on all sides, whatever path they may choose is mine", says Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* (4 : 1). The different faiths are like the ghats that lead to the same Ganges. This can be further illustrated by a moral of the story as told by the Lord Buddha to his disciples. He used in his parable, the blind men and the elephant to illustrate that partial knowledge always breeds bigotry and fanaticism.

Once a group of disciples entered the city to beg for alms. They found there a number of sectarians holding disputes with one another and maintaining : "This is the truth, that is not the truth." According to Lord Buddha, these sectarians are blind and unseeing. They know not the real, they know not the unreal ; they know not the truth ; they know not the untruth. In such a state of ignorance they dispute and quarrel. According to the story, the king asked the blind men :

"Have you seen the elephant ?"
"Yes, your Majesty."
"Tell me your comments about the elephant."
One blindman said :
"The elephant is like a pot" (elephant head). The
other blind man observed :
"The elephant is just like a winnowing basket"
(elephant-ear).
The other blind man said :
"It was like a plough" (the trunk)

"It was like a granary" (the body)
"It was like a pillar" (the leg)
"It was like a mortar" (the back)
"It was like a pestle" (the tail)
"It was just a besom" (the tuft of the tail)
Then they began to quarrel, shouting, "Yes, it is,
No, it isn't" An elephant is not that, Yes it's like that."

Those who think that truth is in their exclusive keeping and that their religion is the only approach to God, "see only one side of a thing", like the blind men in the parable.

Hinduism does not commit this mistake. It believes in the sanctity and efficacy of devotion to faith at different levels of religious experience and the order of excellence. The real conversion is vertical-from the lower to the higher.

INTUITION (Enlightenment)
↑
KNOWLEDGE (*Jnana Yoga*)
↑
WORSHIP (*Bhakti Yoga*)
↑
SERVICE (*Karma Yoga*)

The Hindu spiritual growth and maturity is from crude forms of worship to the highest contemplation of God. Dr. S. Radha Krishnan explains it more explicitly:

"As students are proud of their colleges, so are groups of their Gods. We need not move students from one college to another, but should do our best to raise the tone of each college, improve its standards and refine its ideals with the result that each college enables us to attain the same goal. It is a matter of indifference what college we are in, so long as all of them are steeped in the same atmosphere and train us to reach the same ideal :[1]

An individual's faith is determined by the kind of person he is. There is hardly any use, for example, in putting a boy in the Honours course, if he is only capable of doing the simple pass course. What is meant for an adult is milk for a baby. And it is his ability that qualifies ideal ("*Ishta*"). The Hindu religion prescribes to each individual according to his needs for attainment of soul-emancipation.

XV
TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGVAD GITA

For the ultimate salvation and God-attainment, Sri Krishna places in the *Bhagavad-Gita* three or according to some, four *margas* (paths) of moral discipline.

---

[1] Dr. S. Radha Krishnan—The Hindu view of life—George Allen and Unwin ltd,, London 8th Impression 1949 (PP. 47—48)

There is first the *Karma-marga* (duty to service) or the path of work, in which the Hindus do their duties simply because those happen to be their duties.

There is then the path of philosophic wisdom and realization, the *jnana marg*, which requires of the Hindus self-realization, so that they may be in a position to discriminate between the self and the not-self and distinguish the appropriate aims and objects of the self from the tendencies and promptings of the not-self.

Thirdly, the Hindus consider the *Bhakti-marga* or the path divine—devotion, where intense attachment to God means the Hindus are free from attachment to all worldly objects whatsoever.

The fourth, which is also sometimes given, is the way of trustful confidence in and absolute self-surrender to God. Any of these paths of moral discipline can effectively kill the selfish feelings of "I ness" and "Mine-ness" and make it possible for the Hindus to lead lives of dedication and service. All these paths are helpful to one another.

The best plan of life according to Shri Krishna :

"He who does My work, holds Me to be Supreme, is devoted to Me; is free from all selfish desires and is devoid of hatred in relation to all beings—he comes to Me" (*Gita* XI : 55). One of the Chief doctrines in the world is that *Karma* (work) and *Upasana* (worship) are ancillary to "*Jnana*" or illumination. "*Jnana marga*" is the most efficacious way to attain liberation of soul. The Hindu outlook on "*Karma* or temple worship and on domestic ceremonials is sympathetic, harmonious and distinctive.

"One cannot, indeed, pursue gains and at the same time seek freedom, *moksha*."

Yet there are those who cannot follow the path of "*Jnana*" and must resort to *Karma Yoga* or to *Bhakti Yoga*, if they are ever to be freed from the wheel of the world. The cultivation of philosophical wisdom alone can bring about the ripening of moral excellence. The keynote here is "transcendence." *Bhakti* and *Karma* must be ultimately transcended if "*Jnana marga*" is to be brought about. The Hindus believe that both "*Karma Yoga*" and "*Jnana Yoga*" have a definite place in the evolution of man, each serving a purpose of its own. But "*Jnana*" brings about the highest positive conceptualization of Brahman by assigning Him the attributes of "Being-consciousness-Bliss" (*Satchidnanda*) which are self-sufficient. *Jnana marga* is not mere a cold study of books, but a warm-hearted striving to realize the truth. The fundamentals of Hinduism are spiritual growth. It is the inwardly calm and receptivity to intuitive knowledge which must be ethically and morally perfect in bringing inward equilibrium. Intellect rests on intuition and moral life or spiritual freedom. It is the seed out of which the flower of perfection evolves.

The way to obtain a vision of the divine presence is not by discussion, by learning or through the intellect, but only through "*Bhakti*", that is, by appealing to God Himself through prayer. This scholarship of the Hindu scriptures should not be confused with piety and love. One can be a very good Sanskrit scholar, can study and be an adept in all great writings of the Gita, but still be far from religion or the pious life. Wisdom and learning are not identical. Learning looks backward to the past. Wisdom looks forward to the future. Wisdom has been defined as knowing what one ought to do next. Virtue is doing it. Wisdom without virtue is a weariness of the flesh. But as volition passes out into action, and science into art, knowledge into power, so does wisdom into virtue.

According to C. Raja Gopalachari, we can teach a monkey to play a number of tricks skilfully and well. But, though dressed in pant and coat and turban or hat and though doing things just like a gentleman, perhaps sometimes even better than a gentleman, the monkey is still a monkey. There is no real and full integration between the thing done, the external and the mind that brings it about. The monkey does it all, not because it knows it is good, but because it is compelled to do it and has learnt it. If in the mind there is no piety and no love of God, any amount of scholarship just amounts to the clever tricks of a monkey and is not true religion. Do you wish to be pious or do you wish to be only a good scholar ? The former makes for the grace of God, makes you good. The latter makes only for pedantry to feed ambition or to satisfy some other lower instinct. Thus the Hindus believe :

"Not by disquisitions, not by keenness of intellect, nor by much learning can you see God, but only when your heart truly yearns for the vision of God and you obtain grace". Brother Lawrence had in his experience found that the best method of worship and prayer, was that of doing the common blessing of the day without any view of pleasing man, but in the knowledge of God's companionship in every task, however mean or common. In his '*Practice of the presence of God*", Brother Lawrence said that it was a great delusion to think that the time for prayer ought to be separately set aside. The time devoted to the work of the day was also the time for prayer and remembrance of God. This is indeed what *Gita* teaches as the way of doing all work and making it an act of worship as well as work. Let every work be done in company with Him.

"Do not be downcast, the Best Friend is always with you. Those that want him have Him at Call", every moment the Hindus shape their character as goldsmith shapes his jewels on the anvil, each stroke of his hammer corresponding to each thought, word and act as based on the teachings of the Gita. By self-control and enlightened thought and action the Hindus seek freedom of their souls from evil and improve themselves. The *Gita* tells the Hindus how to do it. *Yoga* is the home given in the Gita to efforts at self-improvement. *Yoga* is an effort to purfify the character. *Yoga* is the general name given to those mental operations which the Hindus practise in order to make the mind clear and remain pure without difficulty.

In this world, attachment is the cause of all worldly happiness. The attachment of love makes worldly life so sweet. One who has no attachment or bondage has necessarily to become a beggar in the streets. Even he has to care for his torn rags, for fear of losing it. Therefore, bondage and attachment in some form or other are real signs of worldliness; bondage keeps one tied to mundane interests. Freedom can never be had in bondage. Bondage never allows the lotus ofthe heart to blossom. Those who are eager to drink deep the waters of wisdom and roam about in the intoxication of divine ecstasy should never allow bondage to enslave them. The practical wisdom as enunciated in the *Gita* is the very core of renunciation "Thy business is with the action only; never with the reward or merit, accruing from it, let not the fruit of action entangle thee; nor be thou the slave of inaction." And live in action ! Labour ! Make thine acts. The piety, casting all self-aside, condemning gain and merit; equable in good or evil, equability in yoga is piety".

Struggle and trials are worth;

"Be in the struggle; that is your duty. A true hero loves engagement (action as ever a lover wooed his sweetheart..."

Unless love builds the house, they labour in vain, who builds it". Happiness is within oneself. "If it is difficult to find happiness in oneself", says Schopenhauer, "it is impossible to find it anywhere else".

The *Gita* poses the ultimate question.

What is the final test of truth ? We can trust our life to it. And yes, you can safely trust your life and all to the fact underlying all phenomenon.

XVI

KRISHNA-CHRIST

There is a marked difference between the "*Avatar*" (God, incarnate) of Hindu scriptures and the incarnation of Christianity—"I and My Father are One"

According to Rev. Brahma-bandhu Upadhyaya, a Hindu convert who tried to synthesise Christianity and Vedantic philosophy :

The teachings of the *Gita* and that of the New Testment are altogether different. The *Gita* teaches that God descends from age to age to punish the wicked, to reward the righteous and establish religion.

But the *New Testment* holds that God by putting on human nature, has given his life only to make a great sacrifice on the cross at Calvery ("*Prayaschitta*") for the salvation of the fallen human race.

Lord Krishna was a unique manifestation of rational wisdom and power, but Christ was the saviour of the sinners. The Teacher Krishna would not compete with the Saviour Jesus Christ on the merit of resurrection. The Hindu concept of the indestructibility of the soul is the same as the Christians' idea of immortality of the individual spirit. In the opinion of the Hindus, the individual soul is part of the world soul. It seems the author of the *Bhagavad Gita*, borrowed the idea from the New Testment—the Gospel of Christ. The doctrinnaire of salvation or final emancipation is by faith alone. This doctrine of Faith as taught in the Gita is to wean men from rites and ceremonies and to discourage them from the practice of rituals which were common in the vedic age.

The *Gita* takes special care to bring to the notice of man that God is related to the Universe both as a whole and also in detail. In this sense, there is a shrinking similarity with the concept of God in the New Testment. Though everything lives and moves through the power that comes from God, the unequal distribution of various kinds of excellence in this world, it is suggested that the especially endowed beings as being specially representative of God. The fuller revelation of God is seen in divine incarnation of Sri Krishna. Hindu God is not a detached spectator of the world process. He guides it and actively participates in it, though he is not defiled by it. Whenever there is the need, He incarnates Himself i.e. appears in a tangible living form so that the world may be saved and helped to reach higher level in its spiritual evolution. The relation of God to the universe as a whole makes it clear that the destiny of the Universe lies in His hand. The plan and proposal of history are of His making. At every great crisis in history, God descends into the world and becomes a man among men to direct the course of events towards the ultimate object—He has in view.

In the revelation, Sri Krishna shows Arjuna that God by being both transcedant and imminent at the same time pervades the universe and extends beyond it, and that the making of history and the process of the universe are determined by Him.

The freedom that is allowed to the individual soul is limited to the extent of offering or withholding cooperation to the divine plan. The embodied soul, by listening to the voice of *Anantayamani* (the pervading God) through the conscience, may adjust itself harmoniously to the plan and purpose of God of by listening to other voices serve futile causes and ruin its destiny.

The true nature of God may be understood from a cosmological examination of the totality of universal phenomenon, which is apt to lead us to the postucation of a power, above and beyond what is visible, and fully responsible for all that lives and moves. This argument may be supplemented by the need felt for religion in the human heart and the authority that is required to sustain the moral law. This proof may not, however, satisfy certain sceptics and atheists. For the eye of faith has to be opened in addition to the eye of reason before we can see God.

The practice of *Yoga* is also capable of testifying to the reality of God through a vivid experience in the state of *Samadht*[1].

The inter-relations among these ultimate postulates of philosophy—matter, soul and God—indicate the principles of sound ethics. It is taught in the *Gita* that the universe of matter and energy is pervaded by the principle of consciousness so that this principle, being the knower as well as the enjoyer thereof, is seen to be its sustainer and life-giver, and that, again the same world of matter and energy, so pervaded by consciousness is further pervaded and entered into by God, so that He becomes its Absolute and ultimate owner and supporter and enjoyer. This universe of matter and energy is the nature of God; the individual souls, pervading the universe, constitute collectively another and higher nature of God, being but sparks from the

[1] *Samadhi* means the presence of consciousness in sillence but senses are in harmony with God:

Flame Divine. Here the Hindus speak of graded relationship, the matter is subordinate to the soul and both these are subordinate to God. The primary duty of man is evolution and perfection of his soul.

The soul was conceived in the *Gita* to be immortal, immutable and of the nature of consciousness. It is the knowing and experiencing entity within the man, the unifying and coordinating principle that gives meaning to experience and makes knowledge something more than automatic response to external stimuli.

It pervades all things and is present in stocks and stones as well as in plants and animals and man. Nothing in the universe is divorced from the vitalizing union of the spirit.

The extent to which the principle of consciousness asserts itself in difficult beings varies, but even in the things that are considered "dead", the soul is present, though it suffers there on almost total eclipse of its powers and privileges. There are only differences of degrees and not kind among the various beings in the universe. For even in man in whom the principle of consciousness—to the best of his knowledge—finds its highest experience and freest manifestation, the body clogs the soul and limits its powers to know and to enjoy. The senses are conceived not so much as independent and essential instruments of knowledge for the soul, but as cracks and crevices through which light creeps fitfully into the dungeon in which the soul is imprisoned. Without the senses, the soul can experience in it a state of freedom. The senses are like slits in a screen which shut the soul off from knowledge and bliss. The true nature of the soul can be realized either through an analysis of our mental structures or the revealing experience of self-realization which a saint attains in the state of '*Samadhi*' (coma).

While remaining in the body, if a person renounces identification with it, he becomes disconnected with the body, such a person, although with a body, is a liberated soul without any connection without the body. The Hindus consider that the superimposition of desires on the heart is bondage, and the destruction of desires of that superimposition by the knowledge of the universal *Atman* is liberation or salvation.

XVII

THE HINDU CONCEPT OF SOUL

According to the Hindus the human body is not evil in itself. On the other hand, the human body is a fit and suitable instrument for the soul in its career of self-discipline and search for God. The human body is considered to be a packaging for the preservation of quality of soul. The Hindus call this human body as the temple of God.

In truth, the human body is as much a creation of God as is the soul. The difference between them is only one of degree of the self-formation of the one spirit. The divine has shaped the soul as its centre of manifestation and built the body as its vibrant vehicle for the reception and projection of its power and glory. Like the mind and soul, the human body also is to be cultivated, processed and energised in order that it may effectively participate in the spiritual progression and become a plastic instrument for the expression of the realized divinity.

The souls are an embodiment. They have become subject to the limitation of the flesh and have forgotten this original freedom and bliss. The life of embodiement is more or less completely dominated by the needs and necessities of the body. The status and function in life of anyone of us as well as his physical, mental and normal quality is determined by the attributes of the nature of man. Many things that we regard as belonging to the domain of psychology such as desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, as declared in the *Gita*, belong to the realm of the not-self the field for the play of the soul, on the ground that all these arise as a result of the contact between matter and soul. Owing to close correspondence which is thus believed to exist between our physical embodiement and our moral qualities, the "*Gunas*"[1] (attributes) have acquired an ethical reference. Each of these '*Gunas*' reveals itself in its own characteristic way in our moral life. While remaining in the body, if a person renounces identification with it, he becomes disconnected with the body. Such a person although with a body, is a liberated soul without any connection with the body. The Hindus consider that the super-imposition of desires on the witness of the intellect in the heart is bondage, and the destruction of desires of that superimposition by the knowledge of the universal *Atman* is liberation or salvation.

Mr. Rajnesh wrote in his News Letter Vol III 18, September 16, 1977 the following :

Identification is what imprisonment is : Identification means you get identified with a part ; you become one with one part of life, and that part you start thinking of as if it was the whole. Nothing is wrong with the part as such, but the part is part ; it is not the whole. When you start thinking the part as the whole, partiality arises. You become blind to the whole. Now you will be in conflict with reality . . . . Victory is with reality, that is why all the masters have given so much emphasis for surrender. Surrender means to be with reality : then victory is certain because reality is going to win. If you are against it, you are going to be a loser. And we are all losers. We have been fighting. We choose a small part and claim that is the whole. We choose life, we take life out of the basic context– death—and we say: This is me : I am life."

Now you are getting into trouble. You will be encaged in this identification. Once identification is dropped, once you do not get identified with anything, you do not get identified with anything. You simply remain a witness – Not saying, "I am this, or I am that." You simply remain a witness. You see life as passing. You see death as passing. You see sex as passing. You see frustration, joy, success, failure, you are seeing. You remain a pure seer. You do not claim—"I am this." Without claiming, who are you ? Without confining and defining yourself, without giving a limitation—to yourself, if you can remain flowing, just seeing, there is liberation. There is great salvation. Unidentified one is free ; identified one is caged.

---

[1] *Satta*" represents the illumination of wisdom and the 'calm of mind" all passion spent" *Raja*—the energizing activity of self-aggrandisement and Tama—the comatose stupor and deadly inertia of dullness.

You are just a witness. When you feel hungry, what do you say ? You say, "I am hungry." You are not hungry. Your body is hungry : the organism is hungry. You are just a watcher. You just are seeing that this body is hungry. Then you eat and you feel satisfied. And you say, "Now I am satisfied, fully satisfied."

You are not satisfied because you were not hungry in the first place. First you had seen hunger in the body, now you feel satisfied in the body—but you are just a witness. So stop this identification with things that are standing in front of you and suddenly you will see you have never been ill or hungry and never been born and are never going to die. You are the very source of eternity. You are eternal. The souls of men are eternal.

According to Swami Vivekananda[1] desires and evils themself have their uses. There is a glory in suffering. As for me, I am glad I have done something good and many things bad ; glad I have done something right, and glad I have committed many errors, because every one of them has been a great lesson. . . . Not that you should not have property. Have all you want . . . Only know the truth and realise it . . . . All belongs to the Lord, put God in your every movement . . the whole scene changes and the world, instead of appearing as one of woe and misery, will become a heaven."

This is the meaning of the great saying of Jesus :

"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. Heaven is not beyond. It is here and now. Everything is heaven. You have only to open your eyes." Each soul is potentially divine. The goal of life is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy—by one or more or all of them and be free. This is the substance of Hinduism.

XVIII

THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE HINDUS

The Hindus are convinced about the unreality of the world and they regard the universe as merely a picture drawn upon a wall. As children build houses of sand and then throw them down, similarly do people engage themselves in worldly life, and then take leave of it.

As a fly in the vanity of pleasure falls upon the flame of a lamp, similarly people in this life fall upon sensual pleasures in order to kill themselves. In this life, we should live as if we were the shadows of our body. We should surpass the earth in forgiveness, be milder than butter, lighter than a flower.

---

[1] *The life of Vivekanada and the Universal Gosple.*

The weapon of a warrior, the treasure of a miser, the pearl on the temples of an elephant, the hood of a serpent, the nails of a lion, the breasts of a chaste woman, these shall never come to our hands. Similarly, unless we take leave of all egoism, God shall not come to our vision without the grace of the spiritual teacher. He is already inside us, but we do not know that this is so.

We have a rosary of beads, mutter of numbers of prayers ; but he who makes us wave the rosary ; and inspire us with the saying of prayers, him we do not know even though He is inside our hearts. He alone is the spiritual Teacher, Master and Guide.

It would not be possible for any one to meet God until one's ego is at an end. The bliss of an individual is with himself. It does not lie in any external object. If any one possesses merely discrimination and dispensation, the way is open to know God. By the contemplation of God, mountains of sins shall be reduced to ashes. By the contemplation of God, the evils of the world shall come to an end. Contemplation is the beginning of mystic experiences.

"Mystic's final attainment is identification, utter transmutation of self in God." In that situation, "Iron remains iron, fire remains fire, but penetrates iron, stripping off I hood, me and mine."

Mysticism is derived from the Greek word "Mystin", which means "Silence" equivalent to *Mauna*. *Mauna* does not mean here only lack of speech but silence of all the senses. *Maunam* is the attribute of a Hindu saint. But the ordinary meaning of the word is silence.

The Hindu Brahmins are asked to observe *Maunam* when taking food. In this context maunam means only non-speaking (silence). Controlling the urge to speak is one among the many steps leading to mystical experience and spiritual attainment.

Maunam is an important method of worshipping God. *Maunam* in this context does not mean merely silence. It is also the process of keeping the mind free of all thoughts. It implies that the Hindus keep all their senses under perfect control so that during the period of silence, the limbs may not move involuntarily. Such a *Maunam* will enable the divine spark within every one of them, to become active in its progress towards the realization of the SELF.

It is something like self-enquiry. Self enquiry is self-quest. It is an inward movement. When one is set on the path, he has already received the inspiration. The quest is like a plunge into the depths of one's being, tracking the ego to its source, revealing its dissolution as a temporal entity and its re-emergence as real self. That is the great transformation wrought by the plunge.

Matter is a form of veiled life so life a form of veiled consciousness. It is in man that the urge to "grow into a higher pattern by exceeding the limits of the lower" becomes fully awake and self-conscious, revealing the individual as a self-aware participant in a cosmic process, aspiring" to exceed himself" with the power of his will and the light of his vision.

"Man has seen that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own, says Sri Aurobindo in the *Life Divine*, "the evolutionary oestrus is there in his parts of life and mind, the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him. In him the substitution of a conscious for a sub-conscious evolution has become conceivable and practicable, and it may well be concluded that the aspiration, the urge, the persistent endeavour imminent is a sure sign of nature's will for a higher way to fulfilment, the emergence of a great status."

In the poem on "The Unseen Infinite" Sri Aurobindo wrote:
In the inconscient dreadful dumb Abyss
Are heard the heart-beats of the Infinite."

Butler says: "Of course, there may be a philosophy of mysticism . . . but mysticism as such has nothing to say to philosophy . . . (it) is not a philosophy, it is an experience."

According to Prof. S. S. Raghavachar:

"The experience describable as "mystical" is other than sense-experience. Particular sense experience may occasion the occurence of mystical experience, but the core of that experience transcends the realm of the senses. It is also other than the exercise of mere reason or the inferential propensity. In other words, it is not a speculative conjecture or logical construction of any entity of entities.

"It is a species of perception, having all the immediacy of direct experience. in question, therefore, is the direct awareness, not arrived at on the basis of some antecedent and through the application of the laws of logic. It is a primary awareness, and not a derivative working out of a consequence."

Mystical experience is very rich and varied. To demand a definition for mysticism is like asking a description for the coolness of water or for a sweet and undisturbed sleep. Mysticism defies all description. As a kind of experience, it can not be translated into any language. It is an actual experience.

To Bucke, it is "impossible to describe"; to Tennyson, it is "utterly beyond words"; to Koestler, it is an "experience meaningful though not in verbal terms" to Russel, it is an "inarticulate experience gained in moments of insight". It is, in fact, beyond the senses to perceive it, beyond the mind to grasp it and beyond the intellect to know it.

This mysticism which is spaceless, timeless and conversion-free experience explodes Rudyard kipling's prophecy:

East is East, West is West
And never the twain shall meet

A mystic of the Greek Orthodox Church referred to this realisation:

"A strange word will I say to thee. There is some hidden mystery which proceed between God and the soul. This is experienced by those who achieve the highest heights of perfect purity of love and faith, when man, changing completely, unite with God, as His own through ceaseless prayer and contemplation."

Spiritual life has its divine vision, experience, joy and bliss. Attaining this divine realisation Lao Tse declares:

"How pure and still is the Supreme Being
How deep and unfathomable"

To be in accord with man is human happiness, but to be in accord with God is the happiness of God.

Sankaracharya thus spoke of the achievement of illumined soul:

"My ego has disappeared, I have realized my identity with the Supreme Spirit. What is the joy that I feel—the joy of mystic realization ? Who shall measure it ? I know nothing but joy, limitless, unbounded."

He is the source of all consciousness. He is the Ultimate Reality. Where the two become one, one loses its nature. Here you get a glimpse of Divine Communication. You can be fully conscious of the Divine Reality: Brahman, the Supreme Spirit, is intelligence. He is eternal bliss.

Shri Ramakrishana told his disciples:

"Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the ocean of God's beauty. If you descend to the uttermost depth, there you will find the gem of love"—the gem of Divine knowledge and the gem of bliss.

Vedanta postulates the existence of an Absolute Reality, which is Supreme, universal and eternal. It asserts that all religions are but different paths to the realisalion of this Ultimate Truth.

"Let all noble thoughts come from all corners of the universe. Vedanta recognizes the freedom of each individual and every individual to choose his own path to reach the Ultimate Reality.

The Vedanta is the ancient philosophy enshrined in the Vadas and find its clearest expression in the Upanishads. It is no intellectual game, no indulgence in imaginative speculation having little relevance to conduct. The Vedanta is meant not for the *dilettante*, but for the *Mumukshu*, the religious seeker after release from mundane bondage. Philosophy and religion go hand in hand. The most dominant school of the Vedanta is associated with the name of Sankaracharya. It was his purpose to show that what was fascinating in Buddhism had already been in the Vedas. It is called the *Advaita* of Sankaracharya—that which exists is one. Saints call Him variously.

Other Vedantic traditions are known as "Bhakti Movement"—the right of all—however humble or lowly—to approach God and to be redeemed by divine grace. Even Shaivism (adoration of Lord Shiva or Shakti) has also its roots in the Vedas. Shakti is the Divine Mother who too is looked upon as the Ultimate Reality.

Shaivism and Shaktism have stimulated the adoption of Tantric practices which are found in some form or other in the Buddhist cult also. Science and Western culture have not been able to destroy Vedanta which is the "*Sanatan Dharma*" of the Hindus.

Vedanta aims at this goal independently of the enslaving process connected with pleasure. Being lost in such vision, one is the *Brahman* itself, if a man gets a glimpse of such realisation, he stands above fear and anxiety of the world.

XIX

THE HINDU DOCTRINE OF TRANSMIGRATION OF SOUL

According to saint Yajnavalkya[1], when soul becomes weak (apparent weakness due to the weakness of the human body in which it dwells) and falls into a swoon as it were, these senses go more towards it. Soul takes these light particles within itself and centres itself only in the heart. Thus when the person in the eye turns back, then the soul cannot know colour; the senses become one with him; people about him say he does not see; the senses become one with him; he does not taste, the senses become one with him; he does not speak, the senses become one with him, he does not hear; the senses become one with him, he does not think; the senses become one with him, he does touch, the senses become one with him, he does not know' they say.

The tip of his heart more shines and by that shining this soul goes out. When soul goes out either through the eye, the heart or by any other part of the body, the vital function (*pran*) is coming out. He is then with determinate consciousness and as such he comes out.

Knowledge, the deeds as well as previous experience (*prana*), accompanying him. Just as a caterpillar going to the end of a blade of grass, by undertaking a separate movement collects itself, so this self after destroying this body, removing ignorance by a separate movement collects itself. Just as a goldsmith taking a small bit of gold, gives to it a mewer and fairer form, so the soul after destroying this body and removing ignorance, fashions a newer and fairer form as the *Pitrs* and *Gandharvas*, the Gods of Prajapati or Brahma or any other being . . . As he acts and behaves so he becomes, good by good deeds, bad by bad deeds, virtuous by virtuous deeds, and vicious by vice. The man is full of desires. As he desires so he wills, as he wills so he works, as the work is done so it happens.

There is also a verse, being attached to that he wants to gain by *Karma* that to which he was attached. Having reaped the full fruit (lit. gone to the end) of the *Karma* that he does here, returns back to this world for doing *Karma*. So it is the case with those who have desires.

He who has no desire who had no desire, who has freed himself from all desires, is satisfied in his desires and in himself, his sense does not go out. He being

[1] *Brh* : IV : 1-7

Brahman attains Brahman—hood. Thus when all the desires that are in his heart are got rid of, the mortal becomes immortal and attains *Brahman* here.

Deussen says that "the meaning of the whole is that the soul on the way of the Gods reaches regions of ever-increasing light, in which is concentrated all that is bright and radiant as stations on the way to Brahman, the "light of Lights."[1] (*Jyotisam Jyotih*)

According to Mr. Surrendra Nath Dasgupta (in his book: *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I), the self itself destroyed the body and built up a newer and fairer frame by its own activity when it reached the end of the present life.

At the time of death, the self collected within itself all senses and faculties and after death all its previous knowledge, work and experience accompanied him. The falling off of the body at the time of death is only for the building of a newer body either in this world or in the other worlds.

The self which thus takes rebirth is regarded as an aggregation of diverse categories. Thus it is said, "He is the essence of understanding, of the vital function of the visual sense, of the auditory sense, of the essence of the five elements (which would make up the physical body in accordance with its needs), or the essence of desires, of the essence of restraint of desires, of the essence of anger, of the essence of turning off from all anger, of the essence of *Dharma*, of the essence of *Adharma*, of the essence of all that is this (manifest) and that is that (unmanifest or latent).

The self that undergoes rebirth is thus a unity not only of moral and psychological tendencies, but also of all the elements which compose the physical world. The whole process of his change follows from this nature of his; for whatever he desires, he wills and whatever he wills he acts, and in accordance with his acts the fruit happens. The whole logic of the genesis of *Karma* and its fruits is held up within him, for he is a unity of the moral and psychological tendencies on the one hand and elements of the physical world on the other.

The root of rebirth is the desire of the self and the consequent fruition of it through will and act. When the self continues to desire and act, it reaps the fruit and comes again to this world for performing acts. This world is generally regarded as the field for performing *Karma*, whereas other worlds are regarded as places where the fruits of *Karma* are reaped by those born as celestial beings.

"He who knowingly desires is born by his desires in these places (accordingly) but for him whose desires have been fulfilled and who has realised himself, all his desires vanish here (Mund 111 : 2.2)

This destruction of desires is effected by the right knowledge of the self. "He who knows his self as 'I am the person', for what wish and for what desires will he trouble the body . . . even being here if we know it, well, if we do not, what a great destruction." (*Brh* IV : 12 and 14)

---

[1] Deussen's *Philosophy of the Upanishads*—page 335

In the former times the Hindus did not even desire to have sons, thinking, "What shall we do with sons, since this our-self, is the universe." (*Brh* IV : 22). However, the whole scheme is worked out on the principles of desire (*Karma*-passion) and *Karma* only serves as the link between it and the actual effects desired and willed by the person.

XX

THE HINDU CONCEPT OF SALVATION

According to Arnold J. Toynbee there is no prospect for the West and for the Westernizing world. Is Western and Westernizing man likely to succeed in recovering the use of the human faculty for spiritual contemplation ? If this faculty were to atrophy in use, they should forefeit their birth-right of being human, and in the atomic-age the course of their relapse into sub-human animality would certainly be "nasty, brutish and short."

It is possible, however, that the human impulse to seek God may be ineradicable, however hard anybody may try to pluck it out and cast it from mankind.

"What is the chief and highest end of man ? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

In these words, modern man, inspite of himself, declaring the truth that he has been seeking to elude. He is giving evidence against himself and this confession is a plea in his favour and is a hope for his redemption. To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever is to partake of eternal life here and now, without waiting for man's still unspent 2,000,000,000 years of life on earth.

Man's deliverance lies in the realization that he is Brahman. This self-knowledge, the knowledge of self-being the self of all things. Salvation is not an act of service or devotion to God, or for that matter, neither is it cognition, however, much it may lead upto by it.

To know thy-self, to know Brahman is not enough, one must realize *Brahman*. One must realize his identity as Brahman, for *Brahman* is knowledge. Self-knowledge and realization are one and the same. The *Brahaman* is the Ultimate Reality. The empirical existence is the world. The illusory existence is the imagined objects or error in cognition.

Thinking and logic belong to the level of finite life ; while Ultimate Reality transcends more thought. The Real is present to Itself and therefore has no need to think itself.

Empirical knowledge concerns the distinctions of Knower, Knowledge and the Known ; while the Real is free from those distinctions. Since the Real excludes relations, it follows that relational thought strives to know the truth, to apprehend the real, but it can not attempt to know the truth without relating the real to something other than itself, which often causes error to take the place of truth. The erroneous perception illustrates the illusory existence.

Why do we have misery ? It will be good if hunger, disease, etc. do not afflict man. But why do they afflict all human beings ? They will come as long as the body lasts. But, if this body goes, another takes its place. For that body also, hunger, thirst, disease, etc. will come. So, if man could do without the body, then these miseries will disappear. Men take many births. What is the cause of these births ? Men have to reap the consequences of the good and bad deeds done in the previous births.

The self can not reap them. Fire can not burn the self, nor the application of sandal paste make it cool. Therefore, a body is needed. As the result of the good and bad deeds done by men, God endows men with a body and punishes men or rewards men accordingly. Thus the sins that men commit are the cause for the body. If men do not commit any more sins, men shall not be endowed with a body hereafter. Consequently, men should remember that men should not commit sin. Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery : "Sin no more, go in peace."

If a tree is to be prevented from growing, it is not enough to cut off the branches ; the root-trunk must be removed. Similarly, men must discern the cause of sin, and destroy that cause. Why do men perform evil deeds ? Men desire to possess an object. Men devise short-cuts to obtain it. That is sinful. The cause for men's performing sinful deeds is desire. In order to fulfil that desire men perform actions. Knowledge through the senses that a thing is beautiful is the cause of desire. Through efforts men can produce desire, or change it. Knowledge can not be produced, nor changed.

The punishment for the sins men commit is the body. Therefore, if men remove desire which is the cause of sin, there will be destruction of misery. Vedanta which is the peak of the Vedas, teaches the way for the removal of sorrows. Vedanta teaches that men see in this world many illusoryies because men have to accomplish "Secondlessness." What appears to men to exist are illusory ; the true existence that is one is alone Real.

According to Jagadguru Sri Chandra Sekharendra Saraswati, detachment is the only means to salvation. Each one of us is fond of certain things in life ; and the liking develops into attachment or affection or love. When things or persons we like part from us, or we part from them at the end of life's journey, we are afflicted with grief. It, therefore, follows the moment we begin to like a thing or a person, that moment we sow the seeds of grief. Death forcibly separates us from the objects of our attachment resulting only in grief all around us.

When we forcibly pluck an unripe fruit, there is weeping (flow of white juice) both from the stem to which the fruit had all along been attached, and also from the fruit itself. When the same fruit is ripe, it gets automatically seperated from the stem and no weeping takes place. Similarly, we must develop the capacity to leave this world without regret when death knocks at our doors.

The *Gita* declares that "men caught in the meshes of delusion and self conceit;

who are stubborn, filled with haughtiness and purse-proud, utterly disregard all rules."

The *Gita* shows the way to overcome and transcend the sway and influence of the pulls and pressures of the body symbolized by three *Gunas* (qualities). Lord Krishna at the call of human need is born from age to age. He serves devotees as and when they approach Him, and the best way by which He is approached is that of love and undivided devotion. (Gita VIII : 22)

"How does one become a flute in Lord Krishna's hand ?" To be a flute means to become hollow. But man is stuffed full with passion and desires. How then can music come through man ? Man's tone is gruff ; Man is gross. Man is filled with the sense of "I" (*Ahankara*). Man must empty himself out of his ego. Only when man becomes empty, the Lord will breathe through man.

The Hindus seek salvation. This salvation is freedom from all outward compulsions. To be free one must die to the life of the world even which one is in it.

Salvation of the Hindus, according to the Upanishads, is the state of "Infiniteness." Man attains this infiniteness only when he knows his own Self.

The knowledge of the Self reveals the fact that all passions, antipathies and all limitations of man, all that is ignoble and small in man, all that is transient and finite in man is false. Man does not know that he is "pure knowledge" himself.

Man is not limited by anything, for man is the infinite ; man does not suffer death, for man is immortal. Salvation thus is not a new aquisition, a new product a new effect, or a new result of any action, but it is always there as the Truth of man's nature. Man is always free and always free from bondange of limitations. But man does not seem to be so and seem to suffer rebirth and thousands of other troubles, only because man does not know the true knowledge of self. Thus it is that true knowledge of the self does not lead to salvation, but is salvation itself. All sufferings and limitations are true only so long as man does not know his self. Salvation is the natural and only goal of man, simply because salvation represents the true nature and essence of man. *It is the realization of HIS OWN NATURE THAT IS CALLED SALVATION SINCE MAN IS already and always in his own true nature and as such liberated, the only thing necessary for man is to know that he is self-knowledge and therefore is, the only desideratum which can wipe off all false knowledge, all illusions of death and rebirth.*

XXI

AN IMMORTAL UPANISHADIC QUEST FOR SALVATION

This narration is given in the *kath Upanishad* that Yama (the Lord of Death) promised Nachiketas (the son of Gautama) to grant him three blessings at his choice.

Nochiketas, knowing that his father Gautama was offended with him, said :

"O Death, let Gautama be pleased in mind and forget his anger against me."

This being granted. Nachiketas asked the second blessing that the fire by which heaven is gained should be made known to him. This also being bestowed.

Nachiketas said :

"There is this enquiry, some say the soul exists after the death of man ; others say it does not exist. This I should like to know from you. This is my third blessing from you."

"Yama said :

It was enquired of old, even by the Gods ; for it is not easy to understand it. Subtle is its nature, choose another belssing. Do not compel me to this."

Nachiketas said :

"Even by the Gods was it enquired before, and even thou, O Death, sayest that it is not easy to understand, but there is no other philosopher to be found like you. There is no other blessing like this."

Yama said :

"Choose sons and grandsons who may live a hundred years, choose herds of cattle ; choose elephants and gold and horse ; choose the wide expanded earth, and live yourself as many years as you wish. Or, if you receive a blessing like this choose it together with wealth and far extending life . . . . Be a king on the wide earth. I will make you the enjoyer of all desires. All those desires that are difficult to gain in the world of mortal, all those you ask at your pleasure . . . fair nymphs with their chariots, with their musical instruments . . . the like of them are not to be gained by men. I will give them to you, but do not ask the question regarding death."

Nachiketas replied :

"All those enjoyments are of tomorrow and they only weaken the senses. All life is short, with you the dance and song. Man can not be satisfied with wealth. We could obtain wealth, as long as we did not reach you. We live only as long as you please. The blessing which I choose I have said."

Yama said :

One thing is good, another is pleasure. Blessed is he who takes good, but he who chooses the pleasures loses the object of man. But you, considering the objects of desires, have abandoned them. These two, ignorance (whose objects is what is pleasure) and knowledge (whose object is what is good), are known to be far as-under, and to lead to different goals.

Believing that this world exists and not the other, the careless youth is subject to my sway (death). That knowledge which you have asked is not to be obtained by argument. Know worldly happiness is transient, for that firm one is not to be obtained by what is not firm. The wise by concentrating on the soul, knowing him whom it is hard to behold, leaves both grief and joy.

You, O Nachiketas, I believe to be like a house whose door is open to *Brahman*. *Brahman* is deathless, whoever knows him, attains whatever he wishes.

The wise man is not born ; he does not die ; he is not produced from anywhere. Unborn, eternal, the soul is not slain, though the body is slain ; subtler than what is subtle, greater than what is great, sitting it goes far, lying it goes everywhere. Thinking the soul as unbodily among bodies, firm among fleeting things, the wise men cast off all grief.

The soul cannot be gained by eloquence, by understanding, or by learning. It can be obtained by him alone whom it chooses. To him it reveals its own nature.

XXII

LIFE AFTER LIFE

The Hindus firmly believe that desires lead to rebirth. As a result of this desire of man there is the discharge of the semen in the womb of a woman. This is considered as the first birth of man and birth of the son as the second birth and birth elsewhere after death is regarded as the third birth.

It is in man that there comes first the embryo, which is but the semen which is produced as the essence of all parts of his body and which holds itself within itself, and when it is put in a woman, that is his first birth. That embryo then becomes part of the woman's self like any part of her body; it therefore does not hurt her; she protects and develops the embryo within herself. As she protects (the embryo) so she also should be protected. It is the woman who bears the embryo (before birth) but when after birth the father takes care of the son always, he is taking care only himself, for it is through sons alone that the continuity of the existence of people can be maintained. This is his second birth.

He makes this self of his a representative for performing all the virtuous deeds. The other self of his after realizing himself and attaining ages, goes away and when going away, he is born again. That is his third birth (*Aitaraya* II : 1-4)

No special importance is given in the Upanishads to the sex desires; the desire for a son was the same as the desire for money and the desire for money was the same as any other worldly desires (*Brh* IV : 22), and hence sex desires stand on the same plane as any other desire.

Conclusion[1].

A woman of very bad character, a thief, a cheat, and of generally evil repute, was dying and on her death-bed frightened at the prospect of what might follow.

Though she has had, during a long life of evil doing, no thought of religion or of God, yet now she has begun to cry loudly and yet more loudly to God to have mercy on her. So much did she cry that at last she attracted the attention of the Angel who came to see what the matter might be.

[1] *Katha* II : This translation was taken from : *A History of Indian Philosophy* Vol. 1

"Oh Sir," said the woman, "What am I to do ?"

"What is the matter ?" asked the Angel

"Sir, all my life, I have done not one good thing, and now, I am about to die. What will become of me ?"

"Is there not one good act of which you can remember ? Think", replied the angel.

After much thought the woman remembered that when she was a young woman she was almost starving, and found a carrot which was the only food she had had for two days.

As she was about to eat it, another woman, as badly off as herself came to her, begging. Though it was contrary to her usual nature the carrot was divided between them.

This incident then dying woman apologically related to the angel who replied:

"Hold on to that carrot and it will save you."

As the woman was being drawn up to heaven by carrot, many others who had died after leading a life as evil as her own began to cling to her, in the hope of sharing her escape. At that she got jealous and cried out:

"Get off, the carrot is mine." That instant the carrot broke and she fell back into the place of torment.

Thus the excellent story told at the Chicago Parliament of Religion by a Russian representative carries the moral that although one small deed of unselfishness had been sufficient to outweigh her bad *Karma* (deed), her selfishness undid, in a moment, the previous good.

So life moves on in a cycle of birth-death-life until life is detached from all desires and interests and consumated by God's grace for a complete renunciation of all other selfish motivations.

XXIII
KNOW THYSELF

The Hindu culture, in fact, has lured innumerable Western scholars; Max Muller is one of such towering philosopers who wrote in his book on India, "What can it teach us ?"[1]

"If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of some of life, and has found solutions of some of them which will deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant; I shall point to India.

---

[1] Max Muller : *India what can it teach us* ? Longmans, Green & Company London (1899) p-254

"And if I were to ask myself from what literature we have in Europe—who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thought of the Greeks and the Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish may draw that correction which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact, more truly human, life not for this life, but transfigured and eternal life, again I should point to India."

According to Prof. Northrop in his book, "The Meeting of the East and West", it should eventually be possible to achieve a society for mankind generally in which the higher standard of living of the most scientifically advanced and theoretically guided Western nations is combined with the compassion, the universal sensitivity to the beautiful and the abiding equanimity and the calm of joy of the spirit which characterizes the Saints and many of the humblest people in the Orient."

In fact, the culture of the Hindus is an expression of a consciousness of life which formulates itself in three aspects. Sri Aurobindo in his book, "*The Foundation of Indian Culture*"[1] has classified these three aspects in the following manner:

(i) There is a side of thought, of ideal, of upward will and the soul's aspirations;

(ii) there is a side of creative self-expression and appreciative aesthesis, intelligence and imagination; and

(iii) there is a side of practical and outward formulation.

The Hindu philosophy and higher thinking provides the Hindu mind its purest, largest and most general formulation of its consciousness of life and its dynamic view of existence. It is totally religious. Its religion formulates the most intense form of its upward will and the soul's aspirations towards the fulfilment of its highest ideal and impulse.

The *Gita*-the Bible of the Hindus, too says, that within the heart of all men God dwells. The Hindus always cherish him, adore Him, pray to Him and meditate on Him and all Hindus are both blessed and fulfilled.

It is the supreme, enlightened but undestructible Self within each Hindu that is His Lord. The ancient Hindu saints say : "Take shelter in your Supreme Self within (*Prana*). It is very close to the Lord. What men need to realise while living a life in this universe is that pulsating Supreme Self within is the Lord Himself.

It is only because of the existence of this Supreme Self within that men have what men have and men themselves are having or living. If there was no Supreme Self within (*Prana*), neither men nor what men have would have existed in the world.

As long as one does not realize this simple truth, the deity that man worships remains a stranger and can never become his heart of hearts. One cannot hope to attain salvation by worshipping a God whom one keeps at a distance. Why should a stranger fulfil the prayers of another stranger ? So long this truth is not realized God can not be conceived.

---

[1] Sri Aurobindo ; *The Foundation of Indian Culture*: The Sri Aurobindo Library Inc., New York (1953)

This Supreme self within is the Soul of man. It wanders in the womb: it is born as the offspring. Those who remain alive after birth offer themselves so homage. Thus men reveal themselves in the forms of creation, preservation and destruction.

"So out of this darkness, lead me until light"—remember what the venerable saints have said to the Hindus and all mankind and asked them to pray.

However, Hindu culture can be better understood not by looking back to its glories but, by understanding the Hindu concept of the ultimate destiny of mankind. Hinduism sees history only in terms of the dialectics of right and wrong, of an endless time cycle of "*dharma*" (right) and "*Adharma*" (wrong); and as material achievements and advances on a linear time scale.

Men themselves get out of date and fail to relate themselves to the life style of advanced techno-societies in a matter of few years only. The generation gap is an example of this process. The one lesson of history, therefore, is that all achievements are but the product of change and subject to further change. Therefore, man has to project his ego in creating new value, new life style and new accomplishment which in turn, reinforce this driving force. And one has to redress one's promise in a terribly short period of life-span and time.

That is why everybody is in a hurry to do something. There has been a mad rush on every count down. This has resulted in psychiatric and psychological disorders among the Westerners. North America and Europe could well be defined as having "functional psychiatric disorders."

The Report of the U. S. Commission on Mental Health[1] concluded that psychiatric and psychological disorders among Americans, the affluent society, were worse than previously believed and that one-quarter of the total population suffered severe emotional stresses and strains. The report estimated that between 20 million and 32 million Americans need some kind of mental health care at any one time.

But the American officials who helped compile the Report said that even those numbers were "conservative." and that it was probably that about 40 million Americans (out of 214 million total population) had diagnosable mental disturbances and were in need of professional care.

Then, what's the Hindu view of life ?

The Hindu view of life is conditioned by their own historical mind which goes backwards far beyond the stage where the life process began for others in the world. They are the only people with a racial memory which is by and large intact and which takes them beyond the beginning of linear scale of time and even the confines of our planet.

It is true that a Hindu is prone to look at the achievement of man and science as transient because he himself is immortal. All that happens on physical death is

[1] Reported by Richard D. Lyone : *The New York Times* News Service, Sept: 1977

that his soul casts off an old shirt for a new one. Now if "I" the physical man is not the "I" that I am, then of what values are achievements in the realm of matter ? Why should "I" then not concentrate upon knowing what I am ? When Maitrayi insisted on knowing from her husband, Yajnavalkya, what she should do. His answer was "Know Thyself" ; for all that is there in the world is dear to men for its own sake, but for their own selves. He was plain in telling her that even the husband or children are dear for one's own sake.

This Hindu view of life appears to be negative to the West. The Westerner "ego-centric He-man" wants to be a millionaire in wealth and power. He wants to conquer and control the land, air and sea. He wants to be master of all frontiers. He likes to eat the best foods, wear the best clothes, drive the largest and latest model cars, fly the fastest aircrafts and even produce supermen by the manipulation of genes, if necessary. His arsenals can destroy the whole world many times over and himself and that is his glory. It has to be so because there is no hereafter for the Westerners.

A Hindu, however, knows that at the peak of authority and at the pinnacle of glory, all that he has are his actions and experiences from the life past or for the life future. What the West does not want to understand or want to know is that the Hindu view of life is a total way of life in the world. They believe that a Hindu shuns life, but this is far from truth. The Hindu accepts matter as an ally of the spirit and assigns it a spiritual role in promoting the onward march of his soul. The dialectics of challenge and response, therefore, does not interest him.

Instead, he finds himself in a constant ambivalent tension that causes the permanent and the transient arrest and release each other until the divine purposes are fulfilled.

In fact, so different are the perceptions that when someone from the West comes to accept the Hindu view, he can grasp only a part of it. He turns to Hinduism as a fugitive from his civilization or comes to it in the spirit of having a spiritual adventure.

For a Hindu, however, there is no conflict between instinct and rationale ; for him instinct is as much rational as rationale is instinctual. And those who come to Hinduism as fugitives from their Western civilization of Science and technology discover themselves as "Hippies" living on artificial trances and in a world of ecstasy through drugs and sex. They escape into the bliss of the instinct, which in many cases leads them to dissipation or even suicide.

As against that a Hindu gradually masters the instincts when trying to live in a state of bliss. He holds escape or suicide as anti-thetical to life and hence ghastliest of all sins. This something contradictory emerges because a Hindu is committed to living through life in all its fullness. And for one who does such a living is more important than achieving material glory ; for living is a divine purpose ; while achieving is a mere assertion of ego. Hence a Hindu has no use for ego-centric and ethno-centric projections *i. e.* achievement and accomplishment in material inventory or logistics.

The Hindu view of life encompasses all the four aims of life ; that is *Dharma* (divine path of duty), *Artha* (politics and economics), *Kama* (aesthetics, the arts of love and sex) ; *Moksha* (the final salvation-a release from life)

Thus the Hindu religion, philosophy, culture, art, poetry, painting, literature provide for the Hindus the creative expression and the impression of its intuition, imagination and creative intelligence. The Hindu custom and its sanity again illustrate their forms-an outward frame in which the more external life works out what it can of its inspiring ideal and of its special character and nature under the difficulties of the environment.

You can see how much it has taken of the crude material living, what it has done with it, how it has shaped so much of it as possible into some reflection of its guiding consciousness and deeper spirit.

None of them express the whole secret behind, but they derive from it their main ideas and their cultural character. Together they make up its soul, mind and body. That is why the Hindu culture is considered more as human-culture (*Manav-dharma* or *Manav-Sanskriti*). It compasses the needs of every human being irrespective of age, sex, colour, creed or race. The Hindu culture has a universal appeal. Because : "No people on earth took religion so seriously, none toiled on the way to salvation as the Hindus did."[1]

Another Western scholar, Cramb has made similar remarks about the culture of the Hindus that "in religion it is the earth's central shine. India is religion." In fact, religion is India and its people. Dr. Bhagawan Das said : "In this land of religion, a prophet never lacked appreciative audience, nor freedom to express his views."

The German scholar, Dr. Paul Deussen, the author of two important works on the Hindu philosophy ("*The Philosophy of the Upanishads*" and the "*System of the Vedanta*") also spoke highly of the religious genius of the Hindus :

"There have been three occasions so far as we know, on which philosophy has advanced to a clearer comprehension of its recurring task, and of the solution demanded ; first in India in the Upanishad, again in Greece in the philosophy of Parmenides and Plato, and finally, at a more recent times, in the philosophy of Kant and Schopenhaur."[2]

Criticism has been made that India is world-denying that she has a negative approach to life and its problems, and that this accounts for her poverty and backwardness.

---

[1] Dr. Paul Deussen : *Evolution of Religeo-Philosophic Culture in India*—Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi (Reprinted—1922)

[2] Dr. Paul Deussen : *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, Oriental Publishers, Delhi (Reprinted) 1972.

Naipal in his recent book has condemned the Hindu approach to life on the basis of his very narrow, bigoted and superficial observations. This again is responsible for India's "negative way of perceiving things, for its intellectual second-ratedness which generally taken for granted but may be the most startling and depressing fact about the world's second most populous country, which now has little to offer to the world except its Gandhian concept of holy poverty and the recurring crooked comedy of its holy men and which while asserting the antiquity of its civilzation (and usually simply asserting, without knowledge or scholarship) is now dependent on other imperfectly understood civilizations".[1]

Even those who have not been so denunciatory, have considered that Hindu way of life is one-sided. The prevailing degenerate condition of Indian society was its natural condition. The Hindu society was condemned by its own inablility to rejuvenate itself. By erroneous standards the Hindus are treated as idolizing people.

The central idea is this :

"Hinduism is as escapist, self-centred, stupor-inducing religious of rituals, idle meditation, meaningless symbolism and social unconcern".

"The culture it has produced is, therefore, violent, hypocritical, self-righteous, intellect-destroying and wholly incapable of coping with the realities of life chiefly in the complex modern world"[2].

Does this mean that as Bertrand Russel once suggested, religion and culture of India, however, soothing and attractive, is obsolete and out-dated that it is a survival of medieval ideals and ways of thinking in a scientific and progressive age ?

The question raises issues of far-reaching importance about the validity and significance of religious experience. It has easy enough for Locke, Hume and the French Encyclopedists, for Comte and Huxley to dismiss religion as primitive superstition and look forward to the triumph of reason. Marxism popularized the concept that religion is the device intended by a crafty ruling class to retain power and exploit society for their own advantage.

When Freud, Jung and Adler claimed to have demonstrated the existence of the sub-conscious and unconscious layers of the mind, the supremacy of reason as the basis of judgement and the driving force of life was undermined. Nevertheless Freud looked down religion as an illusion fostered by repressions.

However, it became apparent only in the present century that loss of faith in religion does not result automatically in contentment, happiness and fulfilment.

"Much of the restlessness and uncertainty so characteristic of our time", wrote Aldous Huxley, "is probably due to the chronic sense of unappeased desires from which men naturally religious but condemned by circumstances, exercise of power and the gratification of the senses still leave men discontented".

---

[1] V. S. Naipal : *India : A Wounded Civilization* : Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1977 (p. 189).

[2] V. S. Naipal : *India : A Wounded Civilization* : Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1977

Max Muller once suggested that Indian civilization, deriving its inspiration from the sages and thinkers who meditated in dense forests and were impressed by the vast spaces, majestic mountains and mighty rivers around them and the clear blue sky overhead, developed an attitude to life different from that of the urban civilization for art and science.

He commended it as a corrective to the positive agressiveness of Europe. The Hindus began to explore the inner world of man from time immemorial. A divine discontent prompts the Hindus who seem to have everything to satisfy them, to embark on a spiritual odyssey.

The Indian forests as an environment furnished a stimulus for the development of some human faculties which neither Greeks confined to the tiny city States nor the Tentons fighting for survival against adverse weather and scarce food resources could afford to foster, may look like crass environmental determination with a vengeance. It was the Greek philosopher who gave out the commandment : "Know Thyself". But it was the Hindu saints who experienced this enduring happiness. They had the ultimate goal for the self. They were concerned with ends and means, the ultimate goal of life and the ways of attainment. The Hindus developed a balanced view about the ends of life, allowing in it scope for the pursuit of goodness, pleasures, beauty and the transcendence of finitude.

The spirit animating the religious philosophies of India is of abiding value to the world. Prof. Toynbee has pointed out that in stubbornly clinging to the belief that there is more than one approach to truth and salvation. "India is not only the heir of her own religious and cultural tradition; she is also the residuary legatee of the ancient Mediterrenean world's religious traditions".

We are also reminded by him that in recent times, "Gandhi demonstrated that spiritual activity is the well-spring of practical activity and this inspiration is what makes practical activity bear fruit and not work of havoc".

Here are the features of Hindu philosophy and religion that have struck the historians, poets and philosophers of all civilizations and that have not yet become obsolete.

XXIV

HINDU CULTURE BRIDGES THE CHASM BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Immortal Kant (1712-1804) the great German philosopher had extensive and detailed knowledge of Hindu thought and culture. According to him the Hindus were gentle and tolerant of other religions and nations. He was immensely influenced by the Hindu doctrine of transmigration which to a great extent corresponds to his own philosophy of the destiny of the soul after death.

His follower, Johann Cottliab Fichte (1762-1814) incorporated in his hints for a blessed life (*Anweisung Zu einem selingen leben*) in innumerable verses which simply reflect the Hindu *Advaita* doctrine (God is one without a Second).

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) acknowledged that he owed the best part of his development, besides the impression of the outward world, to the works of Kant and to the holy scriptures of the Hindus and Plato (*in Die welt als wille und vorstellung*—the world as will and idea).

Schopenhauer declared the Upanishadic philosophy as the "production of the highest human wisdom." Further he remarked : "It has been the solace of my life, and it will be the solace of my death."

He was confident that Christianity could never displace the Hindu culture or religion in the East. "It is just as if we fired a bullet against a cliff." Schopenhauer considered the Hindus deeper thinkers than Europeans because their interpretation of the world was internal and intuitive, not external and intellectual. For intuition unites everything ; the intellect divides everything. The Hindus saw that "I" is a delusion, that the individual is merely phenomenal, and that the only reality is the Infinite one, "THAT ART THOU"[1].

Another German philosopher, Paul Deussen (1845-1919) called the Vedanta a system, one of the greatest achievements of humanity in the search for eternal truth. According to Paul Deussen the Hindu philosophy was the one parallel to their own European philosophy.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was very appreciative of the Upanishads and indeed, contemptuous of those Europeans who, devoid of intellectual discernment wanted to convert and civilize the Brahmins.

Nietzsche propounded his central theme, the Gospel of the superman (thus spake Zoroastra 1883-1891) from the imitations of the Manu-Smriti. He saw the supremacy of the Hindu Brahmins as the implicit obedience of the herd to their religious and moral command of the "humbling caste." It is equally significant that Hermann Hesse, the nobel laureate for literature in 1946 found in Hindu thought an answer to his yearning for deliverance from 'Ego' and from the tyrannical dictates of temporality.

In "Journey to the Orient", Hesse said about India, the land of the Hindus that it was "not only a country and something geographical, but the home and the youth of the soul, the everywhere and nowhere, the oneness of all times."

It is important to notice the Hesse, although a Christian, repeatedly substituted the Upanishadic "Love your neighbour for he is yourself", for Christ's Command, "Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself".

Jean-Jacques Ampere (1800-1864), friend of Victor Hugo (1802-1885) is said to have reported that during the Renaissance Greek works were given the attention they deserved, but in his day the Hindu works would be studied and another Renaissance would be witnessed.

---

1. Dr. D. P. Singhal : *India and World Civilization*, Vol. II (Rupa & Company, Delhi-110002).

Louis Revel want a little further when he commented that if Greek culture had influenced Western civilization, the ancient Greeks themselves were the "Sons of Hindu thought".

Louis Jacolliot (1837-1890) praised the Vedas in his "Sons of God" and wrote :

"The Hindu revelation, which proclaims the slow and gradual formation of worlds, is of all revelations only one whose ideas are in complete harmony with modern science."

Repelled by the increasing materialism of the West, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) turned to India for solace :

"The Indian teaching through its cloud of legends, has yet a simple and grand religion, like a queenly countenance seen through a rich veil. It teaches to speak the truth, love others as yourself, and to despise trifles. "The East is grand and makes Europe the land of trifles."[1]

In his essay on Plato, Emerson explicitly acknowledges his debt to India :

"In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell on the conception of the fundamental unity. The raptures of the prayers and ecstacy of devotion lost all being in ONE BEING.

The tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Vishnu Purana*. These writings contain little else than this idea, and they rise to pure and sublime stains in celebrating it."

When Swami Vivekananda gave his historic address at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, America's strikingly perceptive response to Hindu philosophy and religion was already at least half a century old. The first mention of India in Emerson's Journals occurs in 1842 and in the entry for January 30, 1844 he wrote that "all things subsist, and do not die, but only retire a little from sight and afterwards return again." (E.W. Emerson and W.E. Forbe, ed, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1913, Vol. VI)

There is a passage in his Journal for August 31, 1966, which is essentially Vedantic in spirits :

"In the history of intellect there is no more important fact than the Hindu theology teaching that the beautitude of the supreme good is to be attained through science, namely, by the perception of the real and unreal, setting aside matter, and qualities, and affection or emotions, and persons and actions. As *Mayas* or illusions, and thus arriving at the contemplation of the one eternal life and cause, and a perpetual approach and assimilation to him, thus escaping new births or transmigrations."

This may be the finest tribute of an American transcendentalist to the Hindu wisdom and it echoes Schopenhauer's works on Hindu-Buddhist philosophy in his "*The World as will and Idea*" (1819).

---

[1] His poem, "Brahma".

"American religion with its dualistic Greek notion of an ideal God up in heaven and actual man down on earth, has come to a fork in the road. To the left lies a path trod by Hindus. The modern age is moving towards . . . the path of less religion. Hinduism comes to America to point out the path of more religion."[1]

Dr. Wendell futher states in the foreward of the said book :

"Hinduism is simply a study of the amazing adventures of an Eastern Faith in a Western land. Hindu cults persist in America only because they make some contribution to American religious life. In the Vedanta movement it seems to be mainly the peace that comes from sympathy, tolerance and breadth of view."

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was less philosophical than Emerson but he knew his *Bhagavad Gita* well :

"The *New Testament* is remarkable for its pure morality, the best of the Hindu Scripture, for its pure intellectuality." The reader is nowhere raised into and sustained in a bigger, purer or rarer region of thought than in the *Bhagavada Gita* And how he loved to read the *Gita* we can see from what he says about it in his "Walden" (1854) :

"In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems puny and trivial."

It is now important to see that America's profound appreciation of the Vedantic message of Swami Vivekananda was preceded by the Hindu element in two religious movements in America-Theosophy and Christian Science. The Theosophical Society founded in New York in 1875 gave a Hindu orientation to Christianity. It is further evident that when Swami Vivekananda delivered lectures on Hinduism in America, many Americans had understood the words of Whitman's poem :

—Passage, O soul to India
—Eclaircise the myths Asiatic,
—the primitive fables.

And few modern philosophers of the West have shown such an understanding of Hindu religious thought as William James (1842-1910) "*Varieties of Religious Experience : A study in Human Nature*" appeared in 1902, the year Swami Vivekananda died. However, difficult it may appear to be, but it is evident that the philosophical ideas of Allen Geisberg and the Hare Krishna movement have the lucidity of William James in America.

The Indian immortal poet Tagore was greatly impressed and deeply touched by the appreciation of America's deeper understanding of the Vedantic philosophy through the convictions of Emerson and Thoreau. Tagore acknowledged this fact in a message :

---

[1] Dr. Wendell Thomas : *Hinduism Invades America*, Beacon Press, New York, 1930.

"The quest of spiritual realisation which distinguishes America today (1931) is sure to reveal itself in a new Civilization in which Europe will be re-born (and) the vitality of a forward marching idealism will find its perfection assimilating the true gifts of the East as well as the West in the unity of the human spirit."

Martin Luther King was not only voiced the feelings of black Americans when he said :

"Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus Christ above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force in a large scale."

This sentiment was equally expressed in an address by Donald Harrington, a distinguished American Pastor (1952) :

"If Gandhi had come to America, that he did not come, it may very well be because we were unworthy. But his spirit is here. May his spirit dwell with us this day and every day, and through us bring a new and radiant hope to a confused and sorrowful world."

The American President Jimmy Carter in his recent visit to India (January 1-3, 1978) admitted to the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai :

"I woke up early this morning (January 2, 1978) and read from the *Bhagavad Gita* for a couple of hours. It is a very beautiful work, very exciting too. It is quite interesting in that it demonstrates the unimportance of the length of physical life. I am very proud of it. I am going to do some more study."[1]

It seems America took longer to understand Hindu religion and culture than Europe, obviously because in the last quarter of the eighteenth century when the West began its studies in ancient texts, the American people were preoccupied with their political destiny. But through the following century the American mind had a profounder and more continuous response to our philosophy than the rest of the Western world. It is at least partly due to the new world's sense of intellectual freedom which encouraged it to modify its attitude towards the Graeco-Roman-Judaic Christianity of the West. Or else no Western man was capable of producing a purely monistic poem like Emerson's "Song of the Soul" or "Brahma" published in the first number of the Atlantic monthly in 1857 :

They reckon ill who leave
me out ;
When me they fly, I am the
wings ;
I am the doubter and the
doubt ;

---

[1] *Times of India*, New Delhi, January 3, 1978.

And I the hymn the Brahmin
sings.

In assessing Indian heritage Jones already a master of Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabic and the Hebrew, employed his own criteria and the Western standards. His initial conclusion was that Europe excelled in the realm of reason, India in that of reflection. During last year of his life in 1794 he confessed that . . . . . ". . . without detracting from the 'never fading laurels of Newton', the whole of Newton's theology, and part of his philosophy were to be found in the Vedas and other Indian works."

His deep impression about the Hindu culture was really great: "One correct version of any celebrated Hindu book would be of greater value than all the dissertations or essays that could be composed on the same subject."

Jone's evaluation of Hindu thought attracted the attention of contemporary English writers and poets like Gibbon, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson and George Borrow who all acknowledge their debt to Jone's works and the life.

William Blake's (1757-1827) belief that human life is a manifestation of eternal being has an Upanishadic connotation. According to him the soul was the true reality and its corporal form a passing shadow, an encumberance, and his belief that the human was divine, are reminiscent of Hindu monism.

We declared Jesus Christ, "was the only God—and so am I and so are you". He even regarded beasts as "beings, the living ones."

Wordsworth seriously attempted to work out a bridge between mental world of the East and the material world of the West. It is quite possible for a poet like him to see the reflections of the Vedanta when one once reads his poem:

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thought; a sense sublime;
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
And I have felt
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels,
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts
And rolls through all things"[1].

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), wordsworth's friend was equally guided by the Hindu thought and Hindu vision of life. His cordial doctrine, reminiscent of the Vedanta, was the wholeness of and continuity in, self-consciousness as the basis of mental experience which was all absorbed into a single dynamic force, the divine spark in each person, the "I" of every rational being, the free-will which was the eventual source of religious faith as well as of genuine perception.

---

[1] *Tintern Abbey*, 1798.

Coleridge in a letter to John Thirlwell said, he wished to sleep or die "like the Hindu God, Vishnu, to float about along on infinite ocean cradled in the flower of the lotus and wake once in a million years for a few minutes."

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) propounded most significantly the Vedantic doctrine of *Maya* or illusion in his Elegy dedicated to Keats, *Adonais* (1821), perhaps outstanding among his lyrics :

> The One remains, the many change
> and pass,
> Heaven's light for ever shines,
> Earth's shadow fly,
> Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
> Stains the white radiance of eternity.
> Until Death tramples it to fragments.

Shelley suggested the significant Hindu concept that the end of the Life's Journey is to become one with the *Brahman*.*

XXV

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Dr. Paul Deussen makes interesting comparisons between the teaching of the *New Testament* and that of the Vedanta. The primitive standpoint of righteousness by work, according to Dr. Deussen, is represented in the Bible by the Old Testament Law, which corresponds in the Vedas to that which the Hindu theologians call the Law of Deed (*Karmavada*). The *Old Testament* and the Veda alike, proclaim a law, and hold out the prospect of reward for its observance and of punishment for its transgression.

On the other hand, the Upanishads and the New Testament make salvation dependent not on anything done or left undone, but on a complete transformation of the natural man as a whole.

The Upanishadic Vedanta is critical of the path of action or the way of work; the *New Testament* too recognizes the worthlessness of all work even those that are good.

Dr. Deussen also sees a contrast between the Biblical emphasis on sin and the Vedantic emphasis on ignorance. According to the *Bible* we need release from the

---

**Brahman* is like a flash of lighting or like the winking of the eye from the mass of dazzling brilliance. It knows no darkness.

existence because it is the realm of sin; according to the Vedanta because it is the realm of ignorance.

While the *Bible* sees depravity in the volitional side of human nature; the Vedanta sees the intellectual side. Dr. Deussen thinks both these standpoints to be equally justified. However, he proclaims the superiority of the *Advaita* or Vedanta as a doctrine on one account :

"Thou shalt love thy neighbours as thyself" is the requirement of the *Bible*. But on what ground is this demand to be based; since feeling is in myself alone and not in another ? Because, the Vedanta here explains that "Thy neighbour is in truth the very self and what separates you from him is mere "Illusion".

This argument in favour of the Vedanta as the source of altruistic morality was first used by Swami Vivekananda :

"Thou all religions have taught ethical precepts, such as 'do not kill, do not injure, love your neighbour as thyself, etc.' Yet none of these has given the reason why should I not injure my neighbour. To this question there was no satisfactry answer forthcoming, until it was evolved by the metaphysical speculations of the Hindus who could not rest satisfied with mere dogmas. So the Hindus say this universal soul (*Atman*) is absolute and all-pervading, therefore, infinite.

"There cannot be two infinities, for they would limit each other and would become finite. Also each individual Soul (*Atman*) is part and parcel of that Universal Soul which is infinite. Therefore, in injuring his neighbour, the individual actually injures himself. Instead by loving his neighbour, he loves himself. This is the basic metaphysical truth underlying all ethical codes."[1]

Both the Hindus and the Christians have resolved themselves into two great systems. For the Christians there are Catholicism and Protestantism. The Hindus are primarily divided into Shaivism and Vaishnavism—so the adherents of these two systems respectively separated into two great schools of thought and discipline.

The first two are now called "followers of the right hand path". The second school called "followers of the left hand path are an extreme school of thought. The Tantrikas, who make their own tantra of their own peculiarity which is known as Agama Veda tracing back their doctrines to the *Kaula Upanishads*, which is held to be the original authority for their opinion : whence their system is sometimes called *Kaula* as well as *Shakta* and they call themselves *Kaulikas*

And it is these left hand-worshippers *Tantrikas* who devote themselves to the exclusive worship of the female side of Shiva and Vishnu; that is to say, to the Goddess Durga or Kali (Amba, Devi) rather than to Shiva; to Radha rather than to Krishna; to Sita rather than to Rama; but above all to Amba or Devi, the mother-goddess as identified with Shiva's consort, but regarded in her most comprehensive character as "power" (*Shakti*) of Nature, the one Mother of the Universe (*Jagatmata* or *Jagad-Amba*) the mighty mysterious force, whose function is to direct and control two quite distinct operations; namely, first, the waking of the natural appetites and passions, whether for the support of the body by eating and drinking, or for the propagation of living organisms through sexual co-habitation.

---

[1] Swami Vivekananda : *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekanand* Vol, I, Advaita Ashram (1965), Calcutta.

Secondly, the acquisition of supernatural faculties and magical powers (*Siddhi*), whether for a man's own individual exaltation or for the annihilation of his opponents.

The *Bible* is studied in its original as well as in the various adaptions and versions in local languages; whereas the Vedas are studied by the antiquarians, the Upanishads by the philosophers; but every orthodox Hindu must have some knowledge of the Puranas, directly or vicariously, to shape his conduct and to perform the duties essential to the worldly and spiritual welfare. Both literate or illiterate may know the *Bible* but only the twice-born Brahmins know the four Vedas with *Angas* (Supplementary sciences).

However, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his "*Eastern Religion and Western Thought*" approximately quoted Dr. Deussen's version which was explained by Swami Vivekananda :

"India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of mature mind, the quiet consent of the unaquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit and an unifying, pacifying love for all living things."

Schopenhauer repeatedly expressed his opinion about the Hindu Scriptures in the following words :

"In the whole world, there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life—it will be the solace of my death."

XXVI

THE HALL MARK OF HINDU CULTURE

The hallmark of Hindu culture is a definite attitude of the Hindus to life and its problems, a positive character and certain way of responding to outside influence, a stability of purpose and steadfastness of objective.

The object of Hindu culture is primarily to enable to look at life steadily unlike in the West and look at it with a perspective—as a whole—both the outer life and the inner life of an individual.

The inner life of the cultured Hindus is more profound and deep, more comprehensive and elaborate, more universal and common—in real life, it is more human and truly human—a step by step transfiguration towards eternal salvation.

The Hindus have the duty of being truthful in thought, word and deed and of not craving but of giving away his fortune to supplements and the fruits of his spiritual research to disciples and followers.

The Hindu conception of life and its conduct, social, spiritual as well as individual is also equally organized in view of these considerations. Again the formation of the organisation is based on an understanding of the meaning of human existence, human behaviour, human purpose and human aspirations. It is equally based on human needs and interests and a consequent scheme for conductive human life in accordance with that meaning.

The fundamental meaning of life and existence as understood by the Hindus permeates through all the forms of social organizations which are intended to regulate and direct the conduct of individual life.

Therefore, the first task of the Hindu philosophers have been to narrate and try to understand the Hindu fundamental conceptions concerning human existence as a whole and its objective, its aspirations and its mission as enumerated in terms of these fundamental conceptions, in order that the researchers may be able to visualise against a proper background, the right perspective of the Hindu Scheme of social organization as it has to come to be formulated and as it is meant to function.

All forms of social organizations including the various social institutions have emerged out of human needs. The human needs define human interests. The actual planning or devising of the different forms of social organizations takes place for the adjustments of human behaviour.

A cultured Hindu according to the *Bhagavda Gita* must have sweet and inoffensive manner, conduct and character of life. His understanding should be clear, definite and comprehensive; he has liberty of feeling and independence of principle, nothing can ruffle his temper or cloud his vision.

The Hindu culture suggests a new angle of vision resulting in humanity and largeness of heart. So Hindu culture is clearly distinguished from literacy and education alone.

The main aim of Hindu culture is to bring to the door of the humblest though illiterate, the highest products of the human mind and heart, rather than to enable him to read, write or cipher for himself only.

Hindu culture is not literacy, it is the highest aim of education among the Hindus. Hindu culture is comprehensive in its inclusiveness. Hindu religion, Hindu art, Hindu painting, Hindu literature, Hindu philosophy are all inclusive as compared to those in Greek or Roman world with their prominence.

The glorious feature of Hindu conservatism is sublimation to high values. Hindu religion is concerned as "self-discipline" leading to "self-realisation". Even music and poetry become handmaids to culture in their highest forms.

The Hindu sculpture and painting address themselves to the representation of ideal forms, rather than to the portraying of men and women from life however beautiful. The Hindu culture is not the denial but the fulfilment of religion. The highest ideal is not exactly, "to know thyself", but to know the self, which puts his knowledge at once into relation to the macrocosm.

The Hindu culture is as many sided as life; it includes intellectualism, emotion and volition; it takes account of the aesthetic instinct as well as the spiritual impulses of man. It has also in effect, an appeal to the sub-conscious as a force making for the formation of character. Hence the insistence on particular poses and attitudes in social festivals and domestic ceremonies.

It is, in fact, an economy in spiritual evolution to have such habits formed and modes of conduct cultivated.

XXVII

FUNDAMENTALS OF HINDU CULTURE

The unity of Hinduism is not one of an unchanging creed, or a fixed deposit of doctrine ; but is the unity of a continuously changing life pattern in the process of evolution. For the Hindus their culture is an experience of attitude of mind to reality of existence. It is the consciousness of the Ultimate Reality, not a theory or dogma about God. For the Hindus, though God is formless, He yet is in forms and sustains countless forms. He is the crown and fulfilment of you and me, of all men and all women, of life and death, of joy and sorrow. No outward form can wholly contain in inward reality, though every form brings out an aspect of it. Thus Hindus did not believe in either spiritual mass conversion or a standard religion for all. In that Hinduism is not like Christianity or Islam.

A.L. Basham says :

"We do not intend to disparage the Hinduism of the intellectual and the mystic . . . of the kind espounded by the professor. But let us remember of the artist and poet, with its rich mythology and legend, the Hinduism of the simple man with its faith, its rituals, its temples, and its sacred images. Both are part of India's heritage."[1]

According to the Hindus, this life merely by itself alone would have no meaning ; it has meaning only as link—even if the last—in a chain of links—of births in the past and in the future ; it is a stage of transition from the past births towards future birth or births, unless Moksha or final liberation or release from life is obtained within the span of this life.

The *Bhagavad Gita* declares that the self is unknown, eternal, permanent and primeval. He is not slain, when the body is slain. Death is sloughing off the body :

"Just as a person casts off worn out shirts and puts on new shirts, even so does the embodied soul castoff worn out bodies and taken on others that are new."

The *Brhadarnayaka Upanishad* says :

"As a caterpillar, having come to the end of a blade of grass and having made an approach to another, draws itself towards it, even so does this self, having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance and having made an approach towards another, draws itself towards it."

---

[1] A.L. Basham—*A Cultural History of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi (1977).

And as potter, taking a mould of clay, turns it into another shape a newer or more beautiful one, even so does this "self", having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, makes for itself another shape, a newer and a more beautiful one.

Plato says in Phaedrus :

"Every soul is immortal-whatever is in perpetual motion is immortal."

There is indeed a passage in Phaedrus that almost seems a reflection of the Upanishads and the *Gita* speaking of the immortality of the soul to which Plato says :

"Now a beginning is uncreate; for everything that is created must be created from a beginning, but a beginning itself from nothing whatsoever; for if a beginning were created from everything, it would not be a beginning of motion, and as being such can neither be created nor destroyed....And now that which is moved by itself has been found to be immortal. None will hesitate to assert that this power by self-motion is implied in the very essence and definition of a soul."

There are passages in the Upanishads which explain that the liberated soul has an active existence of its own. The Taittiriya Upanishad tells :

"Traversing these worlds, having the food he likes, taking the form he likes, he sits singing songs."

The Vaishnava School holds that the liberated soul is not annihilated in the Universal :

"I want to eat sugar and do not want to become sugar", is the wish of the followers as contrasted with that of Jnani (one has awareness).

Ramanuja, a medieval socio-religious reformer writes :

"To maintain that the consciousness of "I" does not persist in the state of final release, is altogether inappropriate. It, in fact, amounts to the doctrine that final release is the annihilation of the self."

The Vedic ideal of the continuance of the personality is different from that of Christianity. There is no resurrection of the body as a residence in heaven under the rule of God sitting on His throne. There is an effacement of the personality in the egoistic sense for the ideal is one of establishing identity with the "Ultimate Reality."

That is how the words of Yajnavalkya are to be understood; the apprehender and the one to be apprehended becoming an indistinguishable unity.

Thus, essentially, the birth of a human being is bent on opportunity for him or her to free himself or herself from the bonds of this chain of births by living a life of "*Dharma*" (duties and responsibilities of a householder) as enumerated by the Hindu philosophers.

The soul of a man, for the Hindus, is immortal; the bodies in which he lives during the stages of transition may change. The idea of the transfiguration of the soul is visualized in a realistic manner that the deceased is said to meet, after death, the souls of his wife and children and his parents and his relatives and friends and those who had died before him.

The idea of immortality of the soul coupled with the law of the deed and its retribution (*Karmaphal*) is further developed in the Upanishads. Here, there is a clear statement of the theory of the re-birth as a result of the consequences of his deeds. The idea is that the soul of the dead takes up a new body. "The mortal being decays like a corn; and like a corn it is born again."

Dr. Raymond A. Moody Jr. in his book, "*Life After Life*", narrates the complete experiences of dying which embodies all the common elements in the order in which it is identified :

A man is dying and, as he reaches the point of greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced dead by his doctor. He begins to hear an uncomfortable noise, a loud ringing or buzzing, and at the same time feels himself moving very rapidly through a long dark tunnel.

After this, he suddenly finds himself outside of his own physical body, but still in the immediate physical environment, and he sees his own body from a distance as though he is a spectator. He watches the resusciation attempt from the unusual vantage point and is in a state of emotional upheaval.

After a while he collects himself and becomes more accustomed to his odd condition. He notices that he is still and has a "body" but one of a very different nature and with very difficult powers from the physical body he has left behind. Soon other things begin to happen. Others come to meet and to help him. He glimpses the spirits of relatives and friends who have already dies, and a loving, warm spirit of a kind, he had never encountered before...a being of light appears before him. This being asks him a question, nonverbally to make him evaluate his life and help him along by showing him a panoramic, instantaneous playback of the major events of his life.

At the same point he finds himself approaching some sort of barrier or border, apparently representing the limit between earthly life and the next life. Yet he finds that he must go back to the earth, that the time for his death has not yet come. And this point, he resists, for by now he is taken up with his experience in the after-life and does not want to return.

He is overwhelmed by intense feelings of joy, love and peace. Despite his attitude, he somehow reunites with his physical body and lives. Later he tries to tell others, but he has trouble doing so. In the first place, he can find no human words adequate to describe these unearthly episodes. He also finds that others scoff, so he stops telling other people; still the experience affects his life profoundly his views about death and its relationship to life.

The soul at death moves out and is accompanied by the person's accumulations of all actions during his life time, and this "*Karmaphal*" (the results of his deeds) determines the form which the soul has to take in the next birth. Man's further life is determined by his own actions (*Karma*), good actions bringing good results, and bad ones bad results.

Rebirth is according to one's own deeds: "as the soul moves out, life (*Prana*) moves out; his knowledge and actions and his consciousness of former births and deeds follow him".

As his conduct and behaviour, so does this "self" (*Atma*) becomes. He whose deeds have been good becomes good; he whose deeds have been evil becomes evil. By the holy deeds, he becomes holy; by sinful ones, sinful. It is for this reason that they say that a person consists merely of desires (*Karma*) as his desires are so his will, as deed; as his deed, so his evolution.

The remedy against the cycle of deeds and births lies in becoming completely free from desires :

"When a mortal man becomes free from all desires that are after his heart, mortal as he is, he nevertheless becomes immortal and achieves the *Brahman*."

So long as the person is committed to *Karma* (desire), he must be born again. Freedom from this tangle of birth and death, however, can be attained by a soul with the help of the performances of proper worship and due sacrifice. A creature is bound by deeds; he is liberated by knowledge; by knowledge he becomes eternal, imperceptible and undecaying. Thus every Hindu tries to attain the liberation of his soul (*Moksha*); for this world is full of difficulties and shortcomings.

If objects of desire are renounced they become source of happiness; the man who follows objects of desires is ruined at that pursuit. Neither the happiness which is derived from a gratification of senses, nor that great happiness which one may enjoy in heaven, comes up equal to even a sixteenth part, i.e. small fraction of the happiness which originates from the extermination of all desires.

The fulfilment of one desire leads to another desire; and so on, an unending pursuits of desires and their consequent "*Karma*" is created. "Contentment does not come from an acquisition of the objects of desires. The thirst for acquisition is only further increased by each fresh acquisition, like fire with new fuel thrown in it."

The most effective way to end the life of "*Karma*" is therefore, to end all desires (*Vasana*). Desire has its own origin in the actual experience of pleasure of senses, touch, sight, or hearing, tastes and smelling. Therefore, "to acquire happiness, a man should vow not to taste not to touch and not to see...."

Here, therefore, it is an extreme from in the idea of attaining liberation (*Moksha*) from the otherwise unending "cycle of birth and death, by cultivating a sense of complete detachment from worldly objects. Manu, the Hindu Law-giver, however, suggests a remedy to out of the cycle of birth and death. That remedy lies in the attainment of the knowledge of the "Self" (*Atma-jnan*). This knowledge of the "Self" is the most blessed of all blessed actions here in this world. Through the knowledge, immortality and freedom from birth is gained.

The state of "supreme bliss" from whence this there is no return to the mundane existence can be obtained only by attaining knowledge of the self:

"He who sacrifices to the self equally recognizing the self in all created beings, and all created beings in the self; because independent like a self controlled and self-luminous being."

To attain the highest state and so to be one with the Brahman, one must be able to recognize the self through the self in all created beings; and be just or equable in his behaviour towards all. This is the real "*Dharma*" of man as prescribed by Manu in the "*Manava Dharma Sastra*"* in terms of his discussion on what's *dharma* and what's *adharma*.

Single is each being born, single it dies; single it enjoys the rewards of its good deeds; single it suffers for its bad deeds. Leaving the body on the ground like a log of wood or a clod of earth, the relations depart with averted faces, but dharma alone follows him. For in the next world, neither father nor mother nor sons, nor wife nor relations stay to help him. *Dharma* stays alone ! *Dharma* embraces duties common to all men and women as human beings i.e. general duties, right deeds including rituals, discipline, sacrifices, harmlessness, liberality and the study of the Vedas; the highest dharma of man is "self realisation".

"*Yo devognau Yopsu*
Yo visvan bhuvanams vivesa
Ya oshadhishu yo vanaspatishu
Tasmai Devaya Namo, Namah."

(—*Svetasvataropanishad* 11 : 17)

Translation :

"To the Divinity
That pervades Fire
That dwells in water
That penetrates in entire Universe
To Him.
That lives in medicinal herbs
That pours life into plains
To that shining One
I offer salutations
I bow in reverence."

Hindu religion subscribes to faith in one eternal truth which is supposedly enshrined in the Scriptures. All these attitudes towards Scriptural texts and teachings are clearly reflected in the following passage :

"There is undoubtedly a truth one and eternal which we are seeking, from which all other truth derives, by the light of which all other truth finds its right

---

**Sastras*—Scientific treatise of human culture.

place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever by any one teacher, thinker, prophet or Avatar. Nor has it been wholly found by us if our view of it necessitates the intolerant exclusion of the truth underlying other systems; for when we reject passionately, we mean simply that we can not appreciate and explain.

Secondly, this truth, though it is one and eternal, expresses itself in Time and through the mind of man; therefore, every scripture must necessarily contain two elements; one temporary, perishable, belonging to the ideas of the period and country in which it was produced, the other eternal and imperishable and applicable in all ages and countries."[1]

Hindu culture has never envisaged a division between philosophy, religion or physics. The Hindu mind has been incurably metaphysical. It can without fear of losing its distinctiveness, participate in all sorts of philosophical and scientific discussions. It may thereby seek not only to enrich itself but also to contribute to the richness of contemporary thought in all its form and discipline. For a Hindu physics merges in spiritualism. Study of the world, of the dynamic and the static of the many splendoured but undivided : this is physics. All that moves, moves by virtue of the principles of physics. When the world is seen as the manifestation of the divine, study of physics becomes an act of meditation and devotion.

The physical universe is an extremely rich one with countless varieties of matter, most of it not only in motion, but in continually changing motion. There are organised motions like those of waves, and disorganised motions as those in a choppy sea. Very often matter appears to consist of assemblages of huge numbers of particles each retaining their identity but in continual interaction. These entities including their bigger agglomerations like stars and galaxies, are in more or less permanent change, in perpetual motion, so much so that the universe appears to be a restless one. Change is thus an essential aspect of all existence in the physical world and, therefore, dynamics becomes the model of all physics.

Drawing liberally from the Gita, the Upanishads, etc., it is established that physics encompasses all physical phenomena and hence is spiritual. Spiritual discipline, is the process to end all processes, a means of restoring coherence and wholeness, a means of "tuning in". The only way to comprehend it and benefit from it is to be doing it.

Having become aware of matter, energy and the empty field of potentiality as "*Vishva*" (universe), one becomes aware of their dyamics. This cognition is the discovery of the nascence of creativity. Creativity flourishes at the fringe of casuality. When this gets established, when casualities themselves are seen manifested in the self-referring cognition, then one sees only unity-in-difference. This is the privilege of being a scientist. This is the yoga of physics. Physics is a spiritual discipline since it aims at comprehending all that is dynamic in a single magnificent vision. What is the use of physical law if it is not for short-circuiting all casually connected events over the time into a connectivity transcending time and space ? The knowable having been known ceases to be. Physics came, not to establish law and order, but to render them transparent and thus deny even the intermediate steps in the chain of connection. Thus science dissolves away the world gradually but steadily. In the atomic age and in the context of the far-reaching achievements of science and the progressively increasing materialistic prosperity there was a real danger of their forgetting themselves, their origin and link with the Creator and the real purpose of life. It is, therefore, fortunate that in these times the saner elements re-assert themselves and mobilise all their strength to bring back the human thought to a state of equilibrium and to bring about a sensible balance between man, matter and God and direct the attention of man towards the realisation of his real identity.

---

[1] Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondichery, 1970.

The Hindu culture and civilization rest on the Vedas. The greatness of the Vedic civilization is without parallel and this has been acknowledged by the world today because the Vedic culture is humanism. Without the basis of morality, philosophy will remain mere polemics and culture meaningless. The Hindus believe that the study of the Vedas ensures happiness not only in the present life but also in the life to come. Hindu culture is a journey towards human destiny. It is the dream of man for his own self-discovery. "Who am I ?" (*Ko ham*?) has to be answered once again and always. Not only by the arts and literature, but also by the sciences, separately and jointly. The reality in terms of which the individual experiences life determines what a culture or a civilization can achieve. Men live by aims; and ideas have consequences. Hindu culture is not a mere system, a philosophy or an ideology, but a living experience and aspiration. Hindu culture points to an oneness essentially binding man, nature, and destiny. Men possess this unity and yet beyond themselves.

In this view the nature of man and the universe reveals itself as consciousness. A greater consciousness means a greater life. At a certain stage of human development it is possible—and desirable—that man should participate in the cosmic consciousness. The possibility of a cosmic consciousness is now being slowly admitted in Western psychology. In the *Yoga* psychology of the Hindus it has always been recognised as a reality and the aim of their subjective progress and self-discovery. When the Hindus wake up from the long dream that they call life, they grow increasingly aware of their higher self, a self-aware force of existence of which mentality is but the middle term. This wider and deeper world-view is based on the observation not of external but internal events or energy-events that is events taking place in the consciousness itself. Such a mature person, a 'sparkling soul' (Scintilla animate), is a guarantee of the evolving process and purpose of the universe.

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy the heart that has grown one with every heart. To be a full human being in this sense is a lifetime's work.

XXVIII

HINDU CULTURE IS INDISSOLUBLE

Compared to such neatly formulated religious creeds as Christianity or Islam, Hinduism appears to be a welter of beliefs, doctrines and practices that defy the understanding and interpretative inquisitiveness of even sympathetic students and scholars. From the Vedic culture, many a Hindu sect deviated and with each new concept, new rituals have come into existence.

Foreign invasions have brought in their wakes their own additions to the mosaic Hindu cultural ground and they have taken with them some chips from the Hindu culture. The cultural front of the Hindus today is a kaleidoscopic projection of infinite colour, design, pattern and variety.

India is the cradle of world's culture. It is a land of synthesis. Its supreme quality is the realization of unity and harmony in the midst of diversity and its special quality still has been its unique capacity to integrate and assimilate all that come into it. With its creativity it has evolved out of all; something harmonious and whole, rich and true. It is rich in its custom and ceremony. Its festivities are colourful and meaningful.

The richness, beauty and greatness of Hindu culture lie, no doubt in its spirit of acommodation. But that does not mean that Hindu culture is a medley of ill-assorted creeds, with no cohesion, no common purpose and no unified understanding. The very fact that it has survived to this day in spite of the vicissitudes of history, science and technology, and does not show any great sign of decay, proves that there is a soul to it which holds together its different limbs in an indissoluble unity.

It is equally true that Hindu culture has gathered round it, with the march of time, certain encumbrances and unessentials as has been the case with every other culture or religion. But a unique feature of the Hindu culture and its cultural history has been the appearance of great reformers—seers of truth—from time to time, whose special mission it was to recognize the people's faith, and infuse in them a sense of unity and purpose. Nowhere else in the world has there been such a galaxy of spiritual leaders who, after having realized the supreme truth, came down to the level of the masses and conveyed to them intimations of the highest dignity and glory of their faith in the 'Ultimate Reality'.

In the view of the Hindus, the Vedas constitute the primary source of Hindu culture. This is the great common measure of agreement among the adherents of the Hindu cults. The Hindu beliefs and practices, philosophies and faiths are, thus, held to have the sanction of the Vedas behind them.

Thus the Hindu culture is a spiritual dome of many-coloured glasses. This united, solid canvas is lighted up by the Hindus' devotion to the Supreme Being. All life of the individual and of the community is made use of for this devotion so as to attain the bliss of unity with the Supreme Being.

As Sri Aurobindo says :

"The spiritual mind of India regarded life as a manifestion of the Self : the community was the body of the Creator Brahma, the people were a life body of *Brahman* in the collectivity, it was the collective *Narayan*, the King was the living representative of the Divine and the other orders of the community the natural powers of the collective self. The agreed conventions, institutions, customs, constitutions of the body, social and politic in all its parts had therefore not only a binding authority, but a certain sacrosanct character."

Hinduism admirably strung together religion, literature, philosophy, enjoyment and spirituality to make up one's daily life and one's culture. To quote Sri C. Rajagopalachari : ". . . the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the legends about Krishna enter into the pattern of thought, speech and action which prevail in the Hindu mythology, Hindu religious rites and Hindu philosophy—these are all interwined—can be recognized in every part of Hindu culture just as on the other hand the Hindu way of life can be seen showing itself in all Hindu philosophy, religious rites and mythology. No one can tell which was the cause and which the consequence".[1]

On the doctrinal side, Hinduism includes practically every type of religious dogmas and the opinions that may be met with in the numerous religious traditions of the world; likewise, on the practical side, it has tolerated, if not encouraged, practically every form of propitiation and worship of God, and almost every style of meditation and spiritual discipline from aboriginal worship to yoga or mystic contemplation that might have prevailed in any age of its cultural history.

The Hindu humanity is helplessly mixed up of conflicting dogmas. "The Indian man (a Hindu) of the present day, according to one author, represents a racial mixture of at least four types of humanity . . . the white Aryan, the brown or copper coloured Dravidians, the dark-skinned Nishadas and Austrichs and the yellow Kiratas or Mongoloids."

Dr. R.C. Majumdar believes that some fundamental idea of Hindu culture as well as some of its beliefs and observances still current in India may be traced as far as the 3rd millennium B.C. and that the worship of Shiva and *Shakti* (power) may be regarded as the oldest form of the Hindu-theistic religion and culture.[2]

However, the expressiveness of Hindu culture is illustrated by a readiness to borrow and an adaption of the borrowed details to the condition of this clime and culture of the Hindus. In the sphere of art, science and education, it has borrowed freely from foreign countries. Hinduism absorbted new cults and social culture of foreign origin and is profoundly, influenced by some of these. But the borrowings are minutely indigenized to the culture of the Hindus without the distinction of its original attributes.

---

[1] *The cultural Heritage and India hereinafter abbreviated CHOI*, Vol. IV Ed : Haridas Bhattacharyaya : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

[2] Dr. R.C. Majumdar : *Evolution of Religio-Philosophic Culture in India*.

The Hindu culture has in it elements of greatness and abiding value which is in evidence through the centuries overcoming and assimilating or adorning and adapting to her peculiar conditions every foreign influence with which she came in contact. Hindu culture took advantage of every phenomenon as it presented itself and transmitted it into an agency for stimulating in human beings a striving towards whatever was noble, good and great.

Without any attempt at conversion, people are converted to Hindu culture. There is no State support for the promotion of Hindu culture, Hindu philosophy or Hindu religion. India is a secular State. All religions under the sun are equally respected by the people of India within its constitutional frame-work and sanction.

In the past, the foreign invaders such as Muslims and the Christians wanted to root out the human culture of the Hindus from the soil of India. Nevertheless, it flourished and endured. It is spoken of as eternal (*Sanatana*). Hindu culture grew in India and spread all over the world. It is also called Vedic culture (found in the Vedas). In the beginning, the Hindu culture was developed on the eastern banks of the river Indus which is the same as Sindhu or Hindu in various languages. This geographical area is now in Pakistan.

Unlike other ancient cultures, not death but development has been the cornerstone of Hindu culture. Prof. J.B. Pratt in his book, "*Why Religions Die*" justifies this statement :

"That which in it was vital and true cast off the old shell and clothed itself in more suitable expression, with no break in the continunity of life and no loss in the sanctity and weight of its authority.

"If a religion is to live it must adapt itself to new and changing conditions; if it is to feed the spiritual life of its children, it must have the sanctity and inventiveness that shall enable it to modify their diet as their needs demand."

It is true indeed, not only the Hindu religion but the whole pattern of Hindu culture has been growing, changing and developing in accordance with the needs of time, circumstances, without losing its essential and imperishable spirit.

The culture of the Vedic age, of the ages of the Upanishads, the philosophical systems, of the Epic age, the *Smriti*, the *Puranas*, the commentators, the medieval saints and the age of the modern reformers is the same in spirit yet very different in form.

Mutually contradictory creeds can and do keep house together without a quarrel within the wide and hospitable Hindu family. The tolerance of difference of opinion and creed within its own fold and even outside itself is an essential characteristic of Hindu culture.

All the diverse doctrines and paths originating at different times and in different countries, however, lead ultimately to the same "supreme truth". This tolerance of Hindu culture has become a philosophy which goes by the name as catholicity and humility of Hindu culture.

From time immemorial there had been much "give" and "take" between the Greeks and the Hindus. Within the first century India absorbed best elements of Christianity into its culture. In medieval times the best of Islamic culture was absorbed into Hindu culture; though the Muslims came to India as hostile creed.

Now in modern times, slowly and gradually the Hindu culture is absorbing all that is best in the scientific and technological civilization of the West, without losing any of its vital elements of Hindu culture. The difference between the Hindu culture and the modern scientific and technological culture lies in the thorough understanding of the nature of man and his relationship with other human beings in the universe and with the universe as whole.

Hindu culture has been based on knowledge. Man is a part and product of nature. The Hindus approach nature through man because it is in himself alone that man can be most aware of reality. Science cannot give knowledge of the real nature of man and of the deeper, imperceptible and immeasurable aspects of nature. All the sciences together cannot do this, much less physical and psychological sciences alone. Modern sciences then leave out of account all that man considers the most important and valuable in himself. It has devised no method yet to understand the real nature of the soul, consciousness and mind, not to speak of the nature of God.

Although, scientific knowledge has proved useful and practical, it has tended to shut our eyes to the deeper nature of man and the universe and consequently we miss much of what we ought to have known. To most of the foreigners what is Hindu culture is not always clear; because the Hindus have no Church where they can assemble to offer their prayers. There is no Hindu council which lays down the doctrine or episcopal bend or convocation or assembly which determines policy, no list of incumbents available in reference books, no set of rules to be found in one Hindu manual. Yet it is definitely a religion and culture for all the Hindus who are born in a Hindu family.

In the usual Western sense Hindu culture may not be cansidered a religion at all. Because Hinduism is like a vast sponge, which absorbs all that enters it without ceasing to be itself. Hinduism has a great assimilating power. It can absorb anything and everything. Like a sponge it has no very clear outline on its borders and no apparent at its centre.

In Hinduism there are no dogmas to be accepted by all; no doctrine of universal application can be found in Hinduism. The foreigners are highly critical of this culture. A Hindu may believe in God or he may not; he may believe in a way of salvation or not; he may have certain moral principles or not; he may have opinions about the nature of the universe or not, he may go to temple or not; and still he is a Hindu.

In this connection it seems relevant to quote the remark of Lord William Bentinck, the British Governor General of India who in 1835 created a properly articulated system of Western education to the Hindus from the primary school to the Universities remarked:

"The result of my own observation during my residency in India is that Europeans generally know little or nothing of the customs and manners of the Hindus. We are all acquainted with some prominent works and facts, which all may read; but their manner of thinking; their domestic habits and ceremonies, in which circumstances a knowledge of the people consists, is, I fear, in great part wanting in us.

We understand very imperfectly their language. They perhaps know more of ours, but their knowledge is by no means sufficiently extensive to give a description of the subjects not easily, represented by the insulated words in daily use.

We do not, we cannot, associate with the Hindus. We cannot see them in their homes and with their families. We are necessarily very much confined to our house by the heat; all our wants and business which would create a greater intercourse with the Hindus is done for us by the native Christians."[1]

It is equally true even today. Many European missionaries and scholars made a valuable contribution to the growth of prose in modern Indian language. They prepared grammars and compiled dictionaries for these Indian languages. The contributions of scholars like William Carey, Gilchrist and Bishop Caldwell were exemplary in this matter.

The Abbe' J.A. Dubois, a European Christian missionary who laboured for some thirty years in India (1792-1823) seems to have recognized from the very first day of his arrival in India that Christian mission work means something more than the mere preaching and expounding of the Gospel. It should include among chief essentials a thorough study of the innermost life and character of the Hindus amongst whom it is to be carried on.

It must be remarked, there is no royal read to such knowledge. One has to prepare the critical analysis of the sacred Hindu writings. Such knowledge has to be gained at first hand, and by the labourious method of personal enquiry. This is an absolute necessity for gaining few Westerners who have made an honest attempt in this direction.

The Westerners should adopt the style of living of the Hindus, study their costoms and methods of life in order to be exactly like them. They must avoid any display of repugnance to the majority of the Hindu prejudices. By such conduct the Westerners are able to ensure a free and hearty welcome from the Hindu community in India. All foreign missionaries coming to India for glorifying the Lordship of Jesus Christ should have religious and intellectual capacity and quality as these traits of man are of special appeal to the Hindus.

---

[1] The Abbe J.A. Dubois.

Normally we see that the basic ignorance of the most of the Western missionaries has turned them easily against the Hindu culture. But a few men who were real scholars and committed Christians have hitherto undertook to tell us what they saw of India and its people, their manners and customs, free from prejudices, and inspite of the great opportunities that India offers to intelligent and observant foreign scholars, the foreign missionaries know far less of the actual life of the Hindus than that of Greece and Rome. The unfortunate part is that they lived in India for the rest of their life.

It is only within the recent times that authentic details have been obtained with respect to the Hindus who dwell in the vast country called India and whose ancient civilization, methods of Government, manners of its people, its creeds and customs are nevertheless so well worthy of notice. It is impossible to doubt for a moment that science and art flourished amongst these people at an epoch when most civilized countries of the West were still plunged in the dark abyss of ignorance. The various forms of their institutions, both political and social; of metaphysics and ethics; all of these had long ago made the people of India famous far beyond their own borders; while the renown of the Hindu philosophers had reached even Europe. The many-ill-informed and often contradictory narratives about India which have been published in the West have deservedly fallen into discredit.

A good deal of good work is required to be done in these areas. But one thing must be made clear that the Hindu creeds, habits, customs and manner of life are absolutely different from any other country of the world. It is doubtless that the Hindu culture is accumulating. It is in fact still accumulating; because it is living. Hindu culture is a living culture. That is why the Hindus call it a "*Sanskriti*" in the whole universe. It is living and eternal.

Many Hindus have read the *Bible* and understood the doctrinal aspects of Christianity thoroughly; but they will never like to possess a copy of the *Bible*. No one what to speak about the foreign missionaries could ever persuade them that such Gospel of Christ contain anything useful which the Hindus did not already know or which was not to be found in one of their sacred Scriptures. No doubt from friendly relations between the Hindus and the educated Christians including some of the enlightened foreign missionaries may at times overcome this absured and inexplicable perverseness; but nothing leads one to hope that the Hindus will ever seek to establish such relations with them.

How could a Hindu have any real feelings of friendship or esteem for the Christian missionaries so long as the latter continue to eat the flesh of their sacred cows, which a Hindu considers a much more heinous offence than eating human flesh.

Moreover, many Christian missionaries have immoral relations with domestic maid-servants of the Indian untouchable community whom the Hindus despise. The Hindus have considered the Christian missionaries as defiled. All white people are famous in India as they have earned a good name as drunkards. They are addicted to night club and dancing with girls late at night and drinking to the tune of Western music. Morally they have degenerated into vices of worst form. They corrupted social life. The Christian missionaries are also from the white community of the West. The Hindus have blindly associated all the vice of the white Europeans with those of the Christian missionaries without making much efforts to distinguish them on separate footing of identifiable priorities in their commitment.

Another degenerating vice of the Christian missionaries in India is that their women are also found eating, drinking and dancing, laughing, or joking with other men and above all they are also found with their bare appearance. Before a Hindu husband, his wife does not dare even talk to other men and to whom it is inconceivable that any woman unless she is a concubine or a prostitute could even think of indulging in such pastimes. How, again, could a Hindu mix with the missionaries when he sees their clothing, which in shape alone seems to him to savour of indecency by showing too much of the human body. The greatest vice of the Christian missionaries are untrustworthiness, deceit and double-standard-dealing which the Hindus have so often had occasions to experience and which are common to all Christian missionaries. It is quite impossible for the Hindu intellectuals to fathom their narrow minds and discover what they really know or mean; more impossible, indeed than with any other people.

The Hindus consider that it would be foolish to rely on such prejudiced, narrow-minded and shallow Christian missionaries. When a missionary lady is seen taking a man's arm, even though he may have the profoundest respect for her, nothing would persuade a Hindu from thinking that she was not a mistress. The Hindus have looked down upon the love-making of the young Christian missionaries, their courtship before marriage and their silly jokes in public. The Christian missionaries are devoid of spiritual attainment and quality of life the Hindus have acquired by dint of discipline and *yoga* practices. The strict principle of etiquette is instilled into the mind of a Hindu in his early youth; whereas intense selfishness is also a common characteristic of the Christian missionaries. The Christian missionaries owe nothing in return to anyone in the Hindu society; he is his own boss. He is a master of all and a servant to none in the Christian community of India. He is the monarch of all that he surveys in India during the whole tenure of his mission assignment. In fact he serves his own interests only and nothing else. In that sense, he is extra-ordinarily materialistic. For promotion of welfare of his own family he would not, however, bother to stoop to any deed if it brings material benefit to him and his family at the cost of His glory even.

He makes it a point of duty not only to hold himself "born-again" superior to all other human beings, but also to despise and hate all Indian Christians whom he lovingly addresses from the Church pulpit once a week on Sunday as "brothers" and "sisters" in Christ. From the bottom of his heart he hates all poor Indian Christians and at times brands them as thieves or scoundrels. All Hindus know the modern Christian missionaries who are professional cheats and hypocrits. Such a Christian missionary thinks himself absolved from any feeling of gratitude, pity, or consideration towards Indian Christians, not to talk about the Hindu community.

If he occasionally shows any kindness to an Indian Christian, it is only for his own selfish interests. The Christian missionaries treat the Indian Christians in general with contempt, hatred and harshness. Such are the Evangelical Christian missionaries and the Hindus consider them a bunch of defiled "*Mlechho*" (untouchables—a bully in local dialect).

How could they bring the Gospel of Christ message of love to the Hindus without a thorough knowledge of Hinduism. To understand India and the Hindu, one has to understand Hinduism and Hindu culture. One must not forget the modern radical adjustments that have been and are taking place within the fold of Hindu culture. The position of Hindu culture and Hindu authority which determine the course of life of the Hindus should not be ignored.

"All the Hindu philosophers who are orthodox have to acknowledge the authority of the Vedanta and all their present day religion, however, crude some of them may appear to be, however inexplicable some of their purposes may seem, one who understands and studies them in-depth can trace them back to the ideas of the Upanishads so deeply have those Upanishads sunk into their race that those of you, who study the symbology of the crudest religion of the Hindus will be astonished to find sometimes figurative expressions of the Upanishads. Great spiritual and philosophical ideas in the Upanishads are today with the Hindus converted into household worship in the form of symbols. Thus the various symbols now used by them, all come from the Vedanta, because in the Vedanta they are used as figures".[1]

Thus the Vedanta, whether the Christian missionaries know it or not, has permeated all the sects of Hinduism and this is what is called the culture of the Hindus. Hindu culture is a mighty banyan tree with its immense and almost infinite ramifications by the influence of the Vedanta. Whether the Hindus are conscious of it or not, they all think the Vedanta, they breathe the Vedanta, they live in the Vedanta and they die in the Vedanta. Every Hindu does that unconsciously or consciously.

"The present India (the land of the Hindus—the mighty Hindustan) is not exclusively Hindu in tradition or influence though in view of the predominance of the Hindu population and its continuity through history it is but natural that most widely accepted way of life is Hindu and it is the Hindu culture that gives to Indian life its special characteristics".[2]

---

[1] *Collected Works of Swami Vivekananda*—Vol-VII, Advaitasram, Almorah, Vol. II, page 121.

[2] K.M. Panikkar : *The Foundation of New India*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1963.

The national form of Indian religion is Hinduism. The term "Hindu" was first used under the foreign domination of the Mohammedans to indicate "uncovered native Indians". The Hindu women do not use any kind of veil like the Muslim women. Only in recent literature have the Hindus themselves begun to assign their religious affiliation to "Hinduism". It was referred to the official declaration of the British Census in 1911. For the religious complexity also is described in Germany as "Brahminism". The term "Brahmanism" refers to the priestly community that constitutes the highest among the castes—a system of particularly rigid and exclusively hereditary.

XXIX
HINDU CULTURE IS DISCIPLINE

It means that Hindu culture is to purify, to transform, to sublime, to mould and to perfect a human being. A cultured Hindu is expected to be a disciplined man who has brought his natural propensitities and emotional impluses under his own control, and directed himself in accordance with the high ideal of ethical consciousness and moral awareness.

The greatest law-giver, Manu admits that by nature (birth) we are all barbarous, uncultured and uncivilized. It is discipline (*Sanskaras*) that raises us to a higher status of life. The man has been endowed with animal drive as well as the power of discrimination and control which is known intelligence (*Budhi*).

Thus intelligence or wisdom enables man not only to discriminate between the proper and improper exercise of a natural propensity, but also to control all the propensities by weakening some, strengthening others and still ordering others to wait for the satisfaction The man who lives by his animal brutal force is an animal by himself. Man stands between animality and rationality. Man can rise up to the level of Gods by his quality of conduct and can easily fall down to the levels of animal in the absence of discipline in life. Discipline is the golden key to the Hindu culture. What is spiritual is also moral. Morality is a disciplined way of life. The general name for this discipline in Hindu is the yoga.

XXX
YOGA

Yoga is not a trick done with human physical muscles or breath or exhibitions of physical skill and practice. *Yoga* is the effect to purify the character of man. *Yoga* is the general name given to those mental operations which the Hindus should practise in order to make the mind clean and remain pure without much difficulty.

Yoga has partly been devised as a means of preparing the mind to accept the teaching of mentalism. For when the mind has become subtle, detached and concentrated by the practice of a *yoga* system, it can more readily grasp this difficult doctrine with conviction. The power which is developed by such practice to abstract attention from physical surroundings and focus it upon internal states or ideas proves its value as an accessory to philosophy be rendering the truth of mentalism less hard to accept.

The mind that has never practised meditation or never engaged in the labours of artistic creation inevitably stumbles at the very threshold of this grand doctrine, whereas the flexibility and abstractiveness of the mind which has previously disciplined itself to the point of easily attending to its own thoughts with complete concentration and complete forgetfulness of its material environment assist it to walk across this threshold and perceive the hereafter hidden ideality of things.

Yoga is the practical path of realisation of the theoretical ideals of the Hindu philosophy. According to the practice of *Yoga*, liberation from the bondage of illusion can be attained. But the attainment of this knowledge requires suppression of the physical and mental modifications and gradual control over body, senses, mind, intellect and ego so that the pure self may be realised. The realisation of the pure self requires the cognition that the self is beyond the body, mind, sense, intellect, ego, etc. It is beyond space and time, liberated, eternal and beyond sins, disease, miseries and death.

This realization of the truth is the self-realization. The attainment of knowledge is by means of study, concentration and meditation. The *Yoga* presents a practical path for the realisation of the self. It tells the way by following which the self can be discovered. *Yoga* is necessary for the study of the Hindu philosophy. Hence it is rightly said : "The *Yoga* system is thus the natural compliment of practical discipline to achieve the ideal of bliss."

Yoga is the process of uniting (or making one realise the essential unity of) the self and the 'ultimate reality', or the individual soul with the Brahman. The *Yoga* may be said to consist of three distinct stages or steps, working out the evolution of life from the human to the divine plane of consciousness.

The first step in this kind of *Sadhana** is to cultivate the habit of moderation in all activities of life. The second rung of the ladder of this synthetic *Yoga* is summed up in three pairs of words :

Serve and love
Give and purify, and
Meditate and realise.

When the preliminary ground is cleared by observing moderation in everything, an aspirant is ready for real *Sadhana*. At this point, he develops an under-

---

**Sadhana*—Spirituality.

standing of his relationship with his fellow-beings in society....A purified mind alone is capable of meditating. Meditation is the gateway to God. When meditation is practised to perfection, one realises God or *Brahman.*

The third stage of *Sadhana* or the last rung of the ladder of spirituality is simple but profound. It is briefly expressed too. If the process of *Sadhana* may be compared to a hill, the first stage resembles the wide base of the mountain extending over a large area in the valley below. As you ascend, the hill becomes steeper but narrower in girth; and when you come to the top, it is almost a point. Exactly similar is this *Yoga* practice that brings about the universality of mind.

Yoga is simply a step and not a stop. When man becomes wiser, he will ascribe to it the significance of being the most predominant milestone on the road to greater realisation. But it still remains a milestone. *Yoga* has a rightful place for the satisfying realisation of the "soul".

Materialism does not adequately explain the higher mental life. It does not throw full measure of light on why man can develop abstract ideas, why man has the capability of conducting thought-pattern on a line of reasoning, the capacity to determine between right and wrong, the imaginative creation of an artist, the innovative creativity of a scientist and the metaphysical thinking of a philosopher and above all, why man can refer to his own consciousness as being an immaterial existence. Materialism has not been able to touch the hem of the under-garment of the human consciousness.

According to Hindu Psychologists, human consciousness has three main aspects *viz.* awareness (cognition—"*jnana*"), desire (longing—"*ichchha*") and activity (action—"*kriya*"). A perfected man or a cultured man or a disciplined man is fully aware of his own nature, of his own potential, of his environment and of his relations with all beings around him. He has a control over his desires and passions. He acts rightly under all circumstances. He does never repent what he has done. There is a definite process of disciplining each of the aspects of man through *Yoga* (*Yoga* of knowledge).

The Yoga of knowledge brings about control over the desire and emotions of man. Thus the *Yoga* of devotion disciplines man in righteousness of duty (the duty of *Yoga* action).

In addition to these three *Yogas,* there are other *Yogas* which aim at the control, training and perfection of one or the other factors of human personality. Physical *Yoga* aims at the control and perfection of physical fitness of body. This *Yoga* is known as *Hatha Yoga.*

The *Kundalini Yoga* aims at awakening into operation of the dormant and potential powers of man which are at present beyond his consciousness and control. The *Soya Yoga* aims at the experience of *Samadhi* (state of coma) through gradual control and concentration of mind.

Lest a *Yogi* (instructor in *Yoga*) should make an evil use of his powers as modern scientists under the control of political leaders of ambitious communities may do, the *Yogi* is first trained in strict observance of certain moral principles called "*Yamas*" and "*Niyamas*" (restrictions and rules), which are considered as the first two stages of powers of *Yoga*.

These "*Yamas*" of restrains and controls are :

(a)	*Ahimsa*	—Freedom from ill-will against all being at all times and in all ways (non-violence)
(b)	*Satya*	—Truthfulness
(c)	*Asteya*	—Abstinence from mis-appropriation of other's property
(d)	*Bramacharya*	—Celibacy or sexual purity and
(e)	*Aparigraha*	—Freedom from avarice

And the rules or observances are :

(a)	*Shaucha*	—Cleanliness, external as well as internal
(b)	*Samtosha*	—Contentment
(c)	*Tapas*	—Austerity or hard-life
(d)	*Sawdhyaya*	—Study; and
(e)	*Shwara—Pranidhana*	—Surrender to God

Mahatma Gandhi laid great emphasis on these restraints and observances and expected every one of his countrymen to follow at least the first two of them, namely truth and non-violence.

The third stage in the advancement of *Yoga* is *Asana* (posture). *Yoga* has prescribed various types of postures e.g. *Padma*, *Veera*, *Seersa*, etc. These postures are very helpful in the control of mind as well as of vital elements in the body. They also help in removing the sufferings due to cold and heat. As a matter of fact, posture is the control of the body. It also keeps the body free from disease and makes it strong. It can control different external as well as internal organs in the body. Thus the *Yoga* philosophers have the valuable insight that mental control requires discipline of the body as well.

The fourth stage in the *Yoga* is the *Pranayama* of the control of breath.

This presupposes the control of the body through postures. By *Pranayama*, the aspirant controls the inhaling and exhaling of breath which helps in the concentration of mind.

There are three main steps in *Pranayama* :

(a) Inhaling —To take in as much air as possible.
(b) Retaining of breath —After the maximum amount of air is taken, the second stage in *Pranayam* is to retain it for half of the time taken in inhaling.
(c) Exhaling —The third stage is to gradually exhale this air in almost the same time as taken in inhaling.

The time taken in all these three stages of *Pranayam* is gradually increased so that in due course the aspirant can control the breath thus helping in the concentration of mind.

The Importance of Pranayam : The boary Indian *Yogi* belief in the physical body surrounded by the its double of an "astral" or "*pranic*" body has not only been vindicated but photographed by the Soviet invention of the Kirlian photography.

According to *Yoga* science, we have not one but two bodies : the physical body surrounded by its double of "astral" or "energy" body. This was also confirmed by the Soviet scientists. This fantastic photographic discovery of the Soviet scientists proves India's ancient *Yogic* concept of the "*Akasha*" material of the body—that is a subtle ethereal field—of *Prana-Shakti*, surrounding the human physique.

Prana is the primal cosmic energy outside the electro-magnetic spectrum and other natural power systems known to science. It exists as the body's subtle link, or antenna, to cosmic intelligence that is the universal life force. When stimulated through *Yoga* practices, *Prana-Shakti* can be activised to enable the human mind to reach higher dimensions of consciousness and obtain powers over nature's invisible force.

The Russian scientists vindicate this hoary Indian theory of the existence of an astral body, an exact duplication of the physical frame composed of a powerful ethereal substance known as *Prana-Shakti* which surrounds the human body to act as a link between human consciousness within the mind and the cosmic parallel beyond.

There is a strict ratio between the physical and the energy body (between atomic-molecular matter and the plasmic state of living things). The energy of any living thing is made up of energy from its physical cells and the more mobile energy of bio-plasma.

What generates this bioplasmic energy ? How do were plenish our energy body? The Kavakh scientists discovered that it is the oxygen we breathe that converts some of its surplus electrons and a certain quantum of energy into the energy body. In the silent high-frequency discharge, they could actually see this process.

Breathing, the *Yogic Pranayam*, it seems, charges the entire bioplasmic body and renews our reserves of vital energy and helps to equalize disturbed energy patterns. Of course, the Hindu philosophy of *Yoga* has always maintained that breathing charges the whole body with 'vital force' or '*Prana*' and *Yoga* prescribes specific breathing exercises for good health.

Now the biologists began to understand why breathing ionized air has a "high medicinal effect for many kinds of disease." Many diseases are shown to begin when the supply of bioplasma deteriorates. Soviet scientists found even spraying a wound with ionized air would greatly speed healing as the negative ions helped restore plasmic body to equilibrium.

With this concept of the biological plasma body, we can open new paths to understanding the growth of cancer, tumors and other form of disease, wrote the biologists confirming the Hindu *Yogic* healers.

After death, life enters in energy matrix. At death, this energy body is supposed to leave the physical body. It is believed by the Hindus that the etheric body, or energy body, interpenetrates the physical body—it is an exact duplicate. At death, we just emerge from our flesh covering and continue our life as an energy body.

The fiifth stage is—*Pratyahara* in the path of *Yoga*. The introversion of the different sense organs by restoring them from their objects is known as *Pratyahara*. By practising this in mind, the aspirant is not disturbed by a worldly object even while he lives in the world. This requires very strong determination and repression of the senses.

The above mentioned five stages are known as external means. The remaining three stages are known as internal means. As a matter of fact the first five are merely preparatory to the later three which are directly concerned with *Yoga*.

The sixth stage in the path of *Yoga* is *Dharma*, the concentration of mind (*chitta*) on some object. This object can be external like the image of some God, etc. It can also be internal as the part in between the eye-brows, the lotus of the heart. This is the beginning in the stage of *Samadhi**.

The seventh stage is *dhyana* (Meditation). In *dhyana*, in the beginning, the aspirant knows only the different parts or forms of the object and gradually he realizes the whole of it. Thus by *dhyana* the aspirant-has real knowledge of the object.

The last and the most important stage of *Yoga* is *Samadhi*. This is the culmination and the goal to which all other above mentioned seven stages are temporary steps.

When the process of concentration and object become one and identical, neglecting the difference between the subject and object, this stage of absolute identity is known as *Samadhi*. In this stage there is no separate cognition of the subject or the process of concentration, and mind attains the form of the object. Thus, in this stage, the subject and object as well as the process of concentration become one.

**Samadhi*—*Samadhi* is ceasation of the modifications of mind. There is an absence of senses; yet life persists.

What are the results of *Yoga* practices ?

According to *Yoga* philosophy, the *Yogis* attain various power (*siddhis*) by the practice of *Yoga*. These powers are mainly of eight types and hence called "*Ashta Siddhis*" (eight powers) :

1. *Anima* —This is the power to become small like an atom (*anima*) and so on to disappear.
2. *Laghima* —This is the power to become light (*laghima*) like cotton and so to fly away.
3. *Mahima* —This is the power to become big (*mahima*) like a mountain.
4. *Prapti* —This is the power to secure whatever is desired.
5. *Prakamya* —This is the power by which all impediments in the will power are removed.
6. *Vashitwa* —This is the power by which all living things can be conquered.
7. *Isitwa* —This is the power by which one attains absolute mastery over all physical objects.
8. *Yatraka mavasayitwa*—This is the power by which all desires are fulfilled.

The above mentioned eight *Siddhis* can be used according to the wish of the *Yogi*; but *Yoga* is meant to be for the attainment of these powers. The ultimate end of *Yoga* is the attainment of salvation.

Yoga brings in the religious or the spiritual mind. What is the spiritual mind? You can only listen when there is no self-projected noise. When you are chattering to yourself, comparing what is being said with what you already know, then you are not listening. When you are observing with your eyes and all kinds of prejudices and knowledge are interfering, you are not really observing. So when you really observe and listen, you can only do so out of silence and control of mind. *Yoga* gives that state of mind.

It is something that you need to cultivate, take years to achieve, because it is not the product of time. On the other hand, it is the product of observation of your daily life, the observation of your thoughts and the understanding of thought. When the mind is completely aware, it becomes extraordinarily silent and quiet; it is not asleep, but highly awake in that silence. Only such a mind can see what truth is, can see if there is something beyond or not. Only such a mind is a spiritual mind. *Yoga* is the answer. Knowledge of *Yoga* can only be available from a Hindu *Guru* (master). The sanctity of the Hindu *Guru* is an old conviction among the Hindus. By common consent he is entitled to absolute obedience and offences against him are heinous crimes. The *Guru* is said to deliver from sufferings and hell.

In West Bengal the family *Guru* is a regular institution in respectable Brahmin caste. In many sects the founder or other prominent saint is described as an incarnation and receives veneration after death.

The modern Transcendental Meditation (T.M. Wave in the West) has been a fervent call during the past few years to come and experience it. It is not a religious movement on the face of it; but it has its deep roots in the Vedas and the lore of the ancient saints. In trying to refine the individual, it aims at refining the present society and the world at large. The propagation of the Transcendental Meditation has brought the Maharishi Mahesh yogi to limelight. He has created a sensation as a modern *Guru* by giving an effective lead to millions of men desperately hunting for mental peace and divine tranquility. The flow of people from the West in response to the Maharishi's call has even been on the increase, as the newspapers report reveal each day.

The Maharishi says that men should lead not merely 100% life, but 200% life. That is 100% of worldly life in all its facets, and another 100% of spiritual life. Life cannot be better lived if one knows how to meditate. The effects of meditation, it is said, are marvellous. There are no two opinions about this point among those who have peeped into it. Its advent into the medicinal world, as few recent reports reveal, will certainly be a great boon. Unquestionably, it can establish the truth that man is not a mere biological entity but certainly something much higher, more sublime and divine.

Yoga system has a cure for all physical and mental ailments and this therapy is cheaper and easily accessible to the common man.

If the Indian scientists and researchers study the Vedas and can dig out the ancient medical system, India can lead the world in giving an easy, effective and economical health dose to the people.

The Westerners by now have found the Indian *Yoga* system effective for mental and spiritual balance and efficiency, physical strength and endurance in work and sports, psychic improvement in internal and social environment, resistence to ailments and infections, improvement of will-power and for attunement with laws of nature and the spiritual forces.

Yoga education used to be imparted at the school level in the past so that a generation chain of mentally, physically and morally wise healthy people may take over the reins of responsibility.

The Hindus have stressed the need for collaboration between *Yoga* and medicine for health and harmony. The main purpose of various phycho-physical methods of *Yoga* is today the maximum autogenous impact on the automatic systems and functions that work best when people are relaxed or resting or sleeping. Without this, the neutro-cellular structure cannont relax for a moment in a stressful day.

The system of *Yoga*-therapy should be based on psychophysical stretch-relax methods, massage, diet control and breath control. They have their combined influence leading to total relaxation of tension and hypertension, mental alertness, development of intuition and endurance. Patients suffering from heart and mental disorders, gastro-enteritis and other physical ailments can be cured by medio-*yoga* system. By this system people can be free from fatigue, fear and boredom and the day to day life will become more interesting and enjoyable as they will feel harmony and comfort in the environment and this will lead to major improvement of the overal performance of an individual.

XXXI
FASTS

Another act of discipline among the Hindus is to resort to fasting. From ancient times, fasts have been observed with religious fervour among the Hindus. The purpose of fasting as a religious or social custom are various. As an act of penitence or of rite before some acts of sacramental eating or an initiation or mourning ceremony or one of a series of purifactory rite, as a means to social rites, it has been resorted to by the Hindus. The length of the fast is voluntary with the Hindus.

But the Hindus are obligated to fast for at least 29 days in a Year. It includes, among other occasions, the anniversaries of the ten God Incarnates (*Avatars*) as well as the eleventh day of each lunar-fortnight of every month.

Besides these obligatory fasts, most Hindus abstain from food frequently as a means of self-discipline and on hygienic grounds, none of them let a fortnight pass over without mortifyiny themselves by abstinence. They even resort to the practice to cure several diseases. Mahatma Gandhi introduced fast in political life of India to gain popular support for his cause of attaining political independence of India against the mighty British empire in India.

In fact, a fast and even the practice of austerity in life are considered to be of religious merit. Brahmins and Hindu women are naturally more particular about fasting. These fasts may be complete or partial and for a longer or shorter period in the case of either category of people. The longer fasts may last for a month, or even six weeks. It is usual to take water, sometime mixed with lime juice, fruit juice, etc. and at times sweetmeats and milk products are allowed to be taken during certain obligatory fasts. It is forbidden to take meat, pulses, the beans, honey and molasses during the fast days. It is objectionable to anoint oneself with oil, shave or to have sexual intercourse, gambling or playing of cards are equally prohibited. It is considered highly meritorious to give alms and sleep on the ground at night in these days of fasting. Fasting is meant to be for purification of body, mind and soul of Hindu men and women.

Conclusion :

So we see that religion has been the basis of Hindu culture and the Hindu way of life. It is the guiding principle of Hindu civilization throughout the centuries.

The Hindus have steadfastly held on to this value against the varied vicissitudes of its cultural history. The freedom of the soul has been for the Hindus the *Summum Bonum* of life; and the divinity of men and women as well as oneness of existence, is the eternal message of Hindu culture. So it is said that India is not only the Italy of Asia; it is not only the land of romance, of art and beauty, it is in religion earth's central shine. India is religion. So is Hindu culture.

"*Ya Devi Sarvabhuteshu Matri Rupena*
Samasthita
Namastasyai Namastasya—
Namastasyai
Namo Namah"

Sri Sri Chandi

Translation :

The Goddess who is present in all
In the form of Mother Divine
Obeisance to Her, Obeisance to Her,
Obeisance to Her,
Mother Benign"

Ruth Benedict in her "*Patterns of Culture*" said :

"What really binds men together is their culture—the ideas and standards they have in common." A more precise definition is difficult as is clear from what she said elsewhere in the said book :

"All the miscellaneous behaviour, getting a living, mating, warring and worshipping the gods is made into consistent pattern in accordance with unconscious canons of choice which develop within culture."

According to A.L. Kroeber, culture distinguishes man from other organic creature. He said in Anthropology :

"Cultures are the products of human societies operating under the Influence of cultures handed down to them from earlier societics...To each distinctive culture there corresponds, necessarily and automatically, a particular society...."

Thus the Hindu culture is the ambience of the Hindu Society, the sum total of the Hindu values. Hindu norms, Hindu wisdom, Hindu technology, Hindu customs and practices or economic and political relations and so on that go to make it. It has a definite influence on the life of an individual Hindu. This has been confirmed by the Hindu way of life they have been pursuing throughout the ages.

The degree to which every individual Hindu is moulded by his culture is enormous. We do not ordinarily recognise the full strength of this shaping process because it happens to everyone, it happens gradually, it is satisfying at least as often as it is painful, and usually there is no obvious alternative open anyway. Hence the moulding is taken for granted and is accepted like the culture itself-perhaps not quite unconsciously but uncritically.

PART II

HINDU CUSTOM

XXXII

FOUR STAGES OF LIFE

The Hindu life moves within the framework of four "*Ashrams*" (stages of life) from birth to death. Equally important and valuable is the Hindu planning of life. This planning of life is based on a psychological study of the interests, needs, capacities, characteristics and social adjustments of an individual at different stages of life from childhood to old age.

Today life is a chaos and confusion all over the world. It has affected the Western civilization in a most miserable state of affairs. There is little difference in the pursuits of man at different ages in the West. From childhood to an old age men and women have to earn their living, have to do almost the same kind of deed, no matter whether they are fit for it or not. They pursue the same type of pleasures whether they suit them or not. With a great insight into the meaning, purpose and capacities of life, the Hindus have understood the absurdities of such kind of living, and so mapped life out into four periods of 25 years each, approximately, taking the total span of life, when properly lived to be of hundred years, and assigned a proper function with its appropriate discipline to each one of them.

Brahmacharya (The Student Life)

It is a period of celibacy and learning (*Brahmacharya*). The first period is meant for building up physical, mental and spiritual health, strength and endurance. It is called the *Brahmacharya ashram* (student life).

Garhastha Ashram : (House-holder)

The second period is called *Garhastha ashram* in which an individual settles down into a family life and performs the duties and discharges the responsibilities of a householder. He is married. He looks after his family.

Vanaprastha (Retirement)

The third period is called "*Vanaprastha Ashram*" in which an individual retires from the active life of a householder and he devotes himself along with his life companion to the service of the society. This stage can aptly be described as he position of a senior citizen in the United States of America. It is not a stage of accummulating material possessions for his family as he did when he was a young householder. It is the time of giving the best and receiving nothing from the community.

Mahaprasthan (Surrender)

It is the final stage of life—the life of a recluse. Here the individual gives up all worldly pursuits and interests and devotes himself to meditate upon the word of God and practise *Yoga*. Thus we see the Hindus follow four castes and four stages of life. We will discuss the Hindu caste system later on in this chapter.

Preparations for four stages of life

In accordance with the principle of biology, psychology, sociology, economics, politics, the ancient Hindu saints like Manu, Atrind and Vasistha, determined the foundation, the discipline, the duty and responsibility and the place in society for each individual at each stage of life.

Thus according to their opinion, a student (*Brahmachari*) should do nothing else than which is conducive to the building up of a strong and healthy body, an alert and penetrating mind, and a pure and noble soul.

He has to acquire all the knowledge he can with proficiency in some vocation which he would have to choose as a householder later in life after completion of education and training. His living during this preparatory period must be in accordance with the requirements of discipline and dedication of this stage. At this tender age, he has to leave home and be a member of some educational institution of repute where he has to live a life of mutual co-operation, help and better understanding for living in the society of other boys of his age. He has not to imitate his parents and their grown-up family members in their living a life of comfort and pleasure.

His life-style is to be a model of hard-work, self-denial, austerity and purity. Within the given time at his disposal, he should make himself a full-fledged matured man, ready to undertake discipline, duties and responsibilities of a family-man on leaving the first stage of life as a student. The discipline of student life comes from the study of the Vedas :

"That of a student (*Brahmachari*) is learning the Vedas, fire-worship, ablution, living by begging and devotion to his teacher even at the cost of his own life, or in the absence of his teacher to the teacher's son or to an old-class-mate."

Thus we see that the first quality insisted upon in the student-life is a thirst for knowledge, and earnestness in the pursuit thereof. A preparation or apprenticeship of some kind is obligatory. Learning is imparted only to those who have undergone certain discipline. All students are to spend a year of contemplation, continence and earnest enquiry. The students are expected to train themselves in the method of self-control and acquire purity of mind in the period of waiting, otherwise highest results are not attained. They must be of good character (*char itra*), tranquil (*shanta*) and composed (*samahita*) and peaceful in mind (*santa-manah*). To these qualities are added fortitude, eagerness and right notion of austerity. Once admitted, the student is to reside with his fellow students and his teacher. He must approach him in all reverence. He must not show hatred or ill-will or disrespect towards his teacher. He is required to conform to the code of discipline laid down for him, which aims at concentration of intellectual effort and at integrity and stability of character.

The important principle under this head is *Brahmacharrya* (celibacy), the practice of continence, on which the Upanishads insist, and for breach of which, even though unwillingly caused, strict penalties would be imposed.

A spirit of enquiry and criticism is expected and encouraged. The aspirants for learning ought to be analytical. A student is required to render service, but menial also, if required In the ancient days, the students were required to collect fuel wood from the forests, to beg for alms, to look after the teachers' household affairs. These duties of the students are mentioned in the Atharva-Veda and the Upanishads. Any one deviates from them is a sinner.

(a) the student is not to eat meat or fish;
(b) he has to observe continence;
(c) to avoid high seats in presence of elders;
(d) to speak the truth;
(e) to inculcate early rising;
(f) to keep clean finger nails and teeth;
(g) to keep punctuality in worship service;
(h) to bathe regularly in the morning and evening.

There are strict rules compelling avoidance of the company of the pupil of dirty habits. The greatest restraint is as regards the sexual impulses. Students of loose sexual habits with frequent emission of vital energy are considered as sinners. Deliberate acts resulting in loss of seed are regarded as acts of theft and of murder of embryo. And the killing of human seed is as heinous a sin as the slaughter of *Brahmin* or the murderer of a foetus.

Even unconscious emission of the vital fluid has its expiatory rites; for it implies not only loss of health and strength, and shortening of life; but loss of intellectual and spiritual power. It is thus a sin against God. The explatory rite is an offering in fire on the new moon day to God Cupid (*Kamadeva*) to whose working in the conscious and or sub-conscious region of the mind the happening is evidently attributed. Thus we see that discipline is held of much greater value than institution and the most important work of the teacher is to help the student to get into an orderly routine life.

Lessons are regarded as lost upon the students unless they become imbued with divine effulgence (*tejas*). Knowledge is not an end, but the means to a higher end in life. The Brahmins who have the profoundest learning look upon living like a child as a higher step in evolution, instructing others by an example and as the highest of all—the realization of the universal principle of Brahmins in all acts, words and thoughts.

Until a student gets permanent habit of being truthful, he cannot realize the truth, which is the highest aim of the Hindu culture and the greatest goal of Hindu education. True discipline consists in withdrawing mind from sense-objects, instead of merely controlling the senses. The great positive discipline for the student is considered to be the practice of *Yoga* regularly; one such discipline consists in the worship of the Sun-God as the universal spirit as well. There are three worships—morning, mid-day and evening.

The main purpose of these worships and prayers is to remind the individual student or the householder that his success in life and spiritual welfare alike depends on his energies running in line with the principles of the universe.

The "*Gayatri*" hymn illustrates handfuls of water to be offered to the Sun. It is a meditation on effulgence of the Lord Sun-God from whom the Hindus desire the stimulus for their mental strivings, spiritual influence and other effective activities. The object of prayers is to establish a bond of relationship, closer fellowship and a habit of righteousness apart from intellectual conviction by working on the subconscious region of the mind. Before each meal that students take, they return thanks to the Lord like any other Hindu householder does : "Oh Savitr (Sun-God) Lord and first cause of production, I see before me the visible effects of Thy work (*satyam*) amidst the mystery of the things unseen."

Again taking water in hand and sprinkling around the dinner plate, the students return thanks to the Water God before taking a morsel of food;

"Oh Water, Thou art the symbol of all creations, and the cover of all, encompassing all in thy infinite expanse.

"I take this food (taking a morsel of food in hand and placing around the plate) for the upkeep of the vital airs in the body, with a drop of moistening water to prepare the elementary system for its work.

"May the food I take be an offering to Universal Brahman so that I may be fed with the waters of everlasting life."

The food, says another hymn, is of God. In the highest sense of the word, everything in this world is either food or the feeder; life's duration is the food for the feeder, this body. Earth is the food of the feeder, space. The food and the feeder depend on each other. He who realises this becomes one with food as well as with the feeder. He feeds on all things that are, and is free.

The hymns to the waters repeated by the student at his bath in the flowing river not only to remind him of the Universal water which flows in all streams from the Ganges onwards; but of his sins and transgressions, committed in eating forbidden food which may excite wrong passions while drinking or in accepting things from greed. The student is disciplined so as to order his daily life as to consider acts of routine from the highest point of view.

The usual method of education is to argue from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract. The Hindu application of the elementary rules of pedagogy is distinguished by the goal always kept in view, namely, religion and philosophy. All arts and sciences branched off from religious studies and are gradually differentiated; but they are always helpful to the active religious life and leads to it in contrast to Greek culture where the acts are autonomous and are independent of religion. Self-education is regarded as the proper method of attaining the highest knowledge. By laborious self examination and self-introspection, a student can only attain to the point of self satisfaction.

A Hindu Teacher

A Hindu teacher is to be a very store house of knowledge, full of sympathy and charity, cheerful and lively and of engaging manners; leading a pure and blameless life, orderly in habits and regular in routines, gifted with a sense of proportion and having the courage of conviction; with a magnetic personality, capable of enforcing discipline, with an optimistic outlook on life, and intent on social service.

He is kind to all, and gentle and pure in speech. He is to have a passion for profoundity and to live a life of austerity and purity. Not only professed students but all the people of the community are to be educated. He has to come from a family of Vedic and scholastic teachers and be intent on the acquisition of the highest experience. The teacher must work with heart and soul; and be like a parent unto his students. He must add the forces of his example to the influence of preception; the teacher is not what he teaches, but what he is;

> "As one acts, he becomes—good by good deeds, bad by evil; what action he perfroms, into that does he become changed."

He is to impart the highest knowledge to his own sons and worthy students provided they are receptive. He is large hearted and will conceal nothing from his pupils. He should impress the essential points and impart true knowledge, after making sure of the earnestness and level of intelligence of the pupil, and satisfying himself as to his character. All Hindu teachers should be remarkable for their humility. A Hindu teacher is a philosopher, a friend and a guide not only to the students but to the whole community at large. The Hindus honour and respect teacher as next to parents.

A Hindu Householder

After his graduation, the student parts with the educational institution and his teachers (*Gurus*) and other fellow students and enters real life. The convocation address to the graduating stadents : "Meet together, talk together, may your minds comprehend alike, common be your thoughts and intentions, common be the wishes of your hearts, so there may be a thorough union among you." (*Rigveda-Samhita*)

Here is the parting address to the students from the teacher :

"Speak the truth, live in the way of "*dharma*" (duties and responsibilities); neglect not to study and think over the sacred texts; get thy teacher a present agreeable to him; go forth and lead a life of a house-holder.

Do not allow thy family to become extinct. Depart not from the truth, deviate not from the path of duty, the path of welfare, the way to glory and prosperity.

Stray not from the right path through negligence or love of leisure. Do thy duty to thy mother; thy father and thy teacher. Be hospitable to guests. Conduct thyself in a befitting manner towards elderly persons. Follow the example of the learned and respected wherein they are free from blame.

You should give with all thy heart, fearing that you are not giving enough, and feeling that what is given is little. Let not a feeling of jealousy ever enter your mind."

Thus we see the highest metaphysical dotrines are combined with ethical precepts. The aim of the Hindu education is to prepare the young and the old alike for social service. The Hindu ideal is the harmony of work and worship attained through perfect obedience to the divine will. The Hindu scriptures are taught to the young children in the form of bed-time stories in the first four formative years of their life.

All Hindus inculcate this habit of listening to the Hindu Ballad and the Epic stories for determining not only the physical status of the child but the future emotional and volitional life of the adult. This is the foundation of his spiritual training. A Hindu is a born Hindu, he lives as a Hindu in a Hindu home and dies as a Hindu whether he goes to the Hindu temple or not.

Tung and Freud have proved by psycho-analysis that the habits formed in these tender years have great influence in determining not only the physical status of the child but the future emotional and volitional life of the adult.

Thus we see that the duty of a Hindu householder is earning livelihood by his own profession; marriage among his equals of different ancestral origin, gifts to Gods, ancestors, guests and servents and eating of the remainder.

According to the desire of his wife he should be devoted to his wife alone. The husband should act according to the wishes of his wife in matters of conjugal relationship, of course avoiding the prohibited nights. He has to take every care of his wife because continuity of family in the world and getting of heaven in the next are through sons, grandsons and great grandsons; therefore, women ought to be attended and should be taken care of.

He who abandons an obedient and skillful, son-bearing and pleasant-speaking wife should be made to give one-third of his property to her. If he has no property, he should maintain her. A widower must marry after the death of his wife. But he should not marry immediately. A Hindu husband must not have more than one wife at any given time. The householder should rise early in the morning or latter end of the night :

"Let him wake in the early hours of the morning and think of the acquisition of spititual merit and wealth, of bodily fatigue arising therefrom and of the true meaning af the Vedas. The householder has to perform his daily religious duties in the morning, mid-day and evening. In the morning he worships the Fire-God and repeats the Scripture-reading sacred to the Sun and studies the meaning of the Vedas and other Scriptures. The religious duties are permanent to a Hindu householder in his own home. It makes no difference whether he goes to the community Hindu Temple or not. Entertainments of guests and feeding of the poor are looked upon as important duties to be performed by a householder. A guest must not be refused food and shelter even if he comes at odd hours; he must be shown due honour and courtesy and after satisfying him with food, he should accompany him to the gate of the house in case the guest does not want to stay any longer for his own accord.

"A guest who is sent by the setting Sun in the evening must not be driven away by a householder, whether he has come at supper time or at an inappropriate moment, he must not stay in the house without due entertainment."

The householder should, honour men of science, arts. age, relations and wealth. The householder must perform sacrifices when he has sufficient means to do such honour to the household deity.

The life of the householder is undoubtedly the most important one. Gautama Buddha says that of the four stages (Orders) of life that of the householder is the fountain head; the other being unproductive.

Vasistha, the Hindu saint points out that "a householder alone performs sacrifice, a householder alone performs austerities and therefore, the order of the householder is the most distinguished among the four orders. As all rivers, both great and small, find a resting place in the ocean, even so men of all orders of life find protection with the householder."

Manu, the Hindu Law-giver says :

"As all living creatures subsist by receiving support from the air, so the members of all orders of life subsist by receiving support from the householder. Because men of the three other orders are daily supported by the householder with gifts of sacred knowledge and food, money, therefore the householder is the most excellent order."

Though theoretically the life of a Hindu is thus divided into these four stages, it is difficult to determine how far the system is observed in actual life. According to the Hindu Law-giver, the four stages of life should strictly be followed but his is clearly an idealistic account not always conforming to practice in our modern age.

However, the life of householder is a very responsible life. It has to be a disciplined life; but this discipline is of a different kind. He has to acquire wealth, but in accordance with the principle of honesty, truth, justice, kindness, self-control, etc. He can enjoy life, not in an unbridled manner, but with moderation and restraint. He has to bring forth and bring up children with whom a householder may be happy, but not without taking sufficient care that they grow into ideal boys and girls. He has to be a productive member of the community by being a thinker, a writer, or an innovator or an administrator or an agriculturist or an industrialist or a financier or by being a skillful manual labourer, worker or a mechanic. Whatever may his profession be, his home must be a happy home in which old parents, children and women must feel happy. A home in which children are not properly taken care of, in which women are not happy, in which old men and women are miserable is according to Hindu saints, like a hell. Prosperity, harmony and sweetness should reign in all Hindu homes. It is the duty and responsibility of all Hindu householders to be the instrument of peace, joy and happiness for the whole family and the community at large.

Vanaprastha (Retirement From Active Life)

Having lived for twenty-five years or so as a householder, an individual should withdraw his interests from the family and retire to a quiet place where he can think about deeper problems of life and thereby be of some service to the society. He is a fit person in his physical health. He can be a legislator or an educator or an adviser to the national governments. It is such retired people who should take interest in social and cultural activities of the community and should become ambassadors or representatives of the nation for the cause of development.

Ambitious young people who enter these fields and services with selfish interests and with ambitions to be rich, fail to discharge their public duties properly and instead of being efficient public servants, they make use of the opportunities— that came to them for gaining more and more money, power and influence, and often fall a prey to corruption. Only people who have refrained from family responsibilities and have no worldly ambitions should be entrusted with great national responsibilities. Most of the great works on philosophy, ethics and science have been written by those people who have made a proper use of this period of life.

In ancient India "*Vanaprastha*" means : "That of a "*Vanaprastha*" (forest recluse) is observance of chastity, sleeping on the bare-ground, keeping twisted locks, wearing dear-skin, fire-worship, ablution, worship of Gods, ancestors and guests and living upon food-stuffs procurable in forests. "This is a of life detachment from passion and pride but deeper involvement in service and commitment to the welfare of the people. This is the third stage of life.

Mahaprasthan (Surrender to God)

This is the final order of life. When the individual is no longer physically capable of doing streneous work in the service of the community, he must make the best use of the rest of his life by settling at some secluded and peaceful place and thinking and meditating on the deeper problems of life and the universe. In this stage, he may dictate books, teach those who approach him for enlightenment and guidance. He can also make use of his time by practising some kind of *Yoga*.

"That of an ascetic retired from the world in complete control of the organs of senses, abstaining from all kinds of work, disowning money, keeping from society, begging in many places, dwelling in forests, and purity both internal and external."

According to the Hindu culture old age should not be a miserable age. It should, indeed, be the most peaceful and happy state of life, in which happiness does not depend upon fleeting enjoyments of life—bent upon the inner light and contenment of the spirit. The Hindu has a strong faith that life does not end in death. Death only opens a gate to another life, the quality and contents of which are determined by our desires and actions. The last stage of this life is to be devoted to the preparation for the next one.

Death is taken to be a welcome change, in which the old and worn out body is to be replaced by a new and better one. A Hindu should always die in peace, because he knows that he has nothing to lose by dying. The later half of his life is called the "path of *nivriti*" (withdrawal from the attachment to the world) and by the time he dies a normal death he quietly and peacefully leaves this world and gladly awaits entry into another through the gate of death because the Hindus believe in the immortality of soul.

"Those whose conduct has been worthy they are re-born in higher species i.e. as Brahmins or Kshatriyas or Vaishyas ; on the contrary, those whose conduct has been low are re-born in lower species such as dogs, pigs or snakes or untouchables (*Chandalas*).

The *Bhagavad Gita* (vii :6) voices a similar view of the transmigration of soul in so far as it is determined by one's desire, adding, however, that one's desire at the moment of death is conditioned by the entire range of his life.

Says Lord Krishna :O Son of Kunti, thinking of whatever object one leaves the body at the time of death, that alone he attains—that object had ever engaged his thought.

"As you sow, even so must ye reap. As ye do unto others, so shall it be done unto ye".

The good ruler punishes or rewards evil or good acts quickly, in this very life; whereas the law of *Karma* would do it, slowly in a subsequent life. As Manu says :

"If the ruler fails to punish criminals according to law, then the strong would devour the weak, as fish do in water.

"If the ruler weilds the rod of punishment justly he and his people prosper and increase in all the three qualities of life, namely, (*dharma*) piety, (*artha*) riches, and (*karma*) desire. But if he is lustful, dissipated, unjust, mean-minded, than he should be slain by that same rod of punishment".

The great Hindu Epic, the *Mahabharata* echoes the same thought :

"He who, having sworn by solemn oath at his coronation to protect the popele from wrongful oppression, fails to do so, should be combined against by the people and slain, even as a mad dog."

The Hindus believe that the name of the Lord must not be taken in vain, nor must engagements and promises be lightly made or broken.

XXXIII
THE LAW OF KARMA

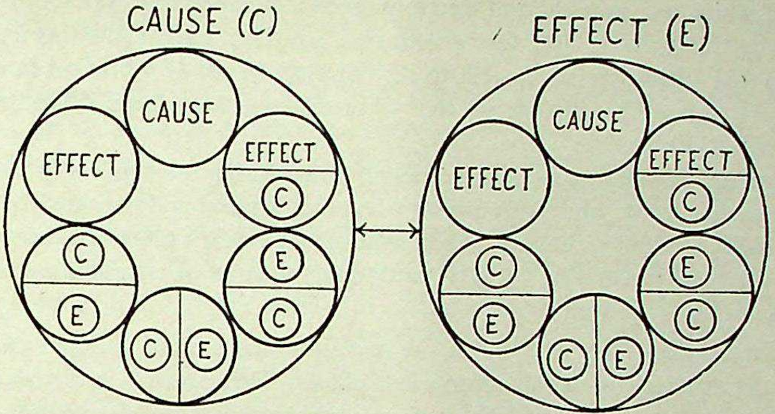
The Hindu Law of *Karma* is the Law of Absolute Justice. The famous scientist, Newton was stating a part of the Law of *Karma* when he affiirmed :

"To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." (third law). A cursory glance at the history of the world reveals that the glory and glamour of many tyrants are soon buried and from the ruins of vanquished nations and races rise mighty civilization outstripping their victors in cultural and technological splendour. Such is the working of the Law of *Karma*—the law of absolute justice—which the Hindus believe.

In fact, all scientific laws are discovered or deducted from a part of the law of *Karma*. To understand, however, the subject lucidly some clear and precise statements are necessary according to some author :

Cause-effect-chain

1. To every cause there is an effect and this effect in turn produces another cause. Thus cause-effect continuity is never broken.
2. If the condition in which a certain cause is introduced remains the same, the same effect will be produced by the cause whenever it operates.
3. The magnitude of the effect produced bears a certain proportionality to the magnitude of the cause producing it.
4. The cause-effect relationship is predetermined by nature and is invariable.
5. If an additional cause is introduced in this relationship before the effect has occured the coming effect is modified.
6. The effect of a cause may not be produced in the immediate future and may not necessarily be known in advance to all.
7. The Law of *Karma* restores the equilibrium of cause-effect relationship.
8. A cause introduced on the physical plane produces an effect in subtle planes of nature– that is, the astrel, mental, casual planes and *vice-versa*
9. Within the framework of the law, man is master of his own destiny.
10. Man is neither punished nor rewarded for his deeds by the Creator; he is punished or rewarded by his deeds.
11. The law of *Karma* is designed to evolve the man to attain cosmic consciousness.
12. This Law is universal in application and governs the working of the universe during its manifestation.



This diagram clearly shows how each cause has produced an effect, and each effcet has become a cause for another effect. It is easy to visualise that the effect produced in each stage has some proportionality to the quality and quantity of materials used in the device. It should be noted here that certain effects like omission of Alpha, Beta and Gamma rays are not visible to us without the aid of scientfic instruments.

To explain, however, the remaining six laws, a brief description of the subtle planes of nature not normally seen by the majority of our race is necessary.

Lord Buddha made a statement of fact when he said, "There are more unseen things than seen." All of us have the latent psychic and spiritual capabilities to observe these mysterious spheres situated right in front of our eyes, but before we can do so, we have to pay the price in terms of practising certain physical, moral, mental and spiritual disciplines for years through many births. If we prefer to wait, practically all of us will be able to roam about consciously in these four million years of natural evolution.

Meanwhile, physical science has already made a beginning in this direction by observing that plants, animals and men alike carry a subtle electro-magnetic field around them. This field is variable in size and intensity and can be detected and measured on certain ultra-sensitive instruments.

Yogis, however, started extensive exploration of these unseen regions more than 5000 years ago. Using their mysterious occult powers they are able to see the smallest sub-atomic particle of matter. Their field of occult vision extends beyond the farhest fringes of the cosmos observed by the most powerful telescope in the world. They tell us that there are seven distinct planes of matter with many subdivisions in between. The basic atomic particle of each plane is finer than the one below it in terms of density. These planes exist simultaneously in the same space, intra-penetrating one another in such a manner that one plane offers no resistance to movement of other planes. This is free from time and space. This is an analogous to a room in which air, sunlight and electromagnetic radiations at different frequencies exist side by side without interfering with one another. Each plane has its ownlabs of physics and chemistry applicable to it; but any change of vibration in one plane causes a corresponding change in the vibration of other planes if the frequency is high enough to do so.

Similar changes occur in the mental body during the process of thinking. It is observed that lower vibrations are set when man's mind is dominated by emotions like sensuality, jealousy, hatred, anger, avarice and selfish price. Higher vibrations with a display of fascinating colours accompany feelings of sympathy, compassion, devotion and selfless love.

When a man feels and thinks, he is continouusly creating desire and thought forms in the atmosphere at the appropriate planes. These desires and thought forms are real living entities with colourful forms composed of rapidly vibrating matter from subtle planes and are capable of existing for days, months and even years depending upon the energy put in them by their progenitor.

God does not rule the universe through His whims and vagaries according to modern and educated Hindus. He rules the cosmos through the Law of *Karma*, which is the law of absolute justice. When He gave men free will to choose between good and evil, He wanted to ensure that men exercise their will in the right direction. The Law of *Karma* is a guarantee to this effort.

Man being the spirit functioning through three bodies, casual, subtle and physical, cannot be said to perish into nothing at the death of physical body. The physical body, the only one which the modern man is conscious, functions in the waking experience; the subtle body functions in the dream experience and the casual body in the deep-sleep. The physical body is born of the parents' body and die at what we call death. It is enlivened, moved and controlled by the subtle body which constituted by the vital energies, sensory and subtle elements, mind, intelligence and ego.

The subtle body does not get dissolved and pass into nothing at the death of the physical body. It goes out of the physical body and lives and moves in the subtle planes of the cosmic which correspond to our dream state for some time and experience there the state of heaven or hell, spoken of in the Hindu Scriptures. After some time determined by desires and acts of the individual, it again returns to the physical plane and enters a newly conceived body and thus resumes its worldly career.

It is really with the subtle body that man knows, feels, thinks and acts in the physical body and on the physical plane. In dream the subtle body becomes isolated from the physical body temporarily and functions more or less independently of the physisal body.

The casual body is still finer in structure and function. In it are stored minute forms all the past experiences of the subtle body. The casual body is the organ of conscience, intuition, phychometry and other functions on the casual plane of the universe which can be approached by man in sleep, deep trance and mystic experience.

The Hindus know that physical death affects only the physical body and cannot do harm to the other two bodies—subtle and casual. The only way it affects them is that they cease to function on the plane of the cosmos. They continue to exist and function in their own planes. Just as when the physical body goes to sleep, the mind functions in the dream state, so when the physical body is dead. the subtle body begins to function in the subtle plane of the cosmos and to have various kinds of experiences there. This plane is what is called the spirtual world by spiritualists and the psychic researchers. It is on this plane, which corresponds to man's dream state, that the dead personalities live until they take their rebirth on the physical plane which corresponds to the waking experience. What death does is to shut off the physical world from the dead by destroying the physical body. It opens, however, a finer subtle world. Modern spiritualistic literature is full of the description of the world and personalities living therein. It is perhaps superior to men's physical world in many ways. A pious liberated soul roams about unrestricted in the most pleasant regions of astral space and reincarnates at will to serve mankind.

Reincarnation

By excessive drinking an alcoholic damages his liver, kidneys and heart and suffers from various types of nervous and gastro-intestinal disturbances. He makes his astral body sink in the lower regions of the astral plane where he suffers under extremely inhospitable and excruciating conditions. By the Law of mutual attraction he reincarnates in a family of alcoholics and inherits the emotional and physical ailments of his parents. Similarly, a debauch is reborn in a family infested with sexual diseases.

It is said that if a man loans a substantial amount to someone but dies before the recovery of his money, he is likely to be born as a son or a daughter to his previous debtor to receive compensation.

In order to award absolute justice the law of Karma ensures that the amount of injury inflicted on others equals the amount of injury suffered by the doer. During the thermo-nuclear explosion thousands of people were mercilessly killed and disfigured. Similar acts of atrocities are commited during wars and national emergencies. Therefore, as the law Karma provides the total amount of suffering and damage borne by innocent victims must equal the torture suffered collectively by people responsible for the crime.

The Hindu *yogis* who have carried out a detailed survey of *Karmic* record assert that extreme cruelty inflicted on helpless animals and men results in physical deformities of an incapacitating nature on the doer. If the cruelty is committed in cold blood without giving the least consideration to the agony of the victims the physical deformities are accompanied with serious mental and emotional derangement. All hereditary and congenital diseases fall in the category.

Of course, the amount of pain and agony suffered individually will be proportionate to the moral responsibility shared in the collective crime. In such cases the perpetrators will be reborn as lepers, invalids, spastics, blinds, etc. with serious incurable emotional and physical maladies.

Natural calamities like floods, droughts, earthquakes, epidemics, etc. are caused by sinful thoughts and deeds committed collectively by regional, racial, religious and political groups. Communities which help others prosper ; while those which commit moral offences perish gradually. Their victims are reborn in extremely good social and economic conditions to accelerate their natural evolution.

The past relation of people with people also determines the surroundings in which they are born. Two people who cannot fulfil their ambition to love each other will be reborn in close proxmity to be able to fall in love again. Friends of past lives are brought together in present incarnation sometime or the other. Even enemies are suitably placed to settle past scores.

The Hindu *Yogis* suggest a very effective technique to deal with this malady. In order to change present conditions men should create a very strong mental picture of what men like to accomplish. Day in and day out for months and even for years men should rotate this thought in their mind, using all the will-power at their command.

If the thoughts are backed by self-confidence and virtuous deeds, this mental practice will set powerful *Karmic* forces in motion. Men will observe that the old relationship has disappeared and men are put by strange coincidence in favourable conditions to accomplish their aim in life or the concept of life.

XXXIV

THE HINDU CONCEPT OF LIFE

Life is not a meaningless accident. It is a continuous process governed by two principles : desires-fulfilment and law of *Karma*. Early or late, in this birth or another, men get whatever men desire and work towards its fulfilment ; but at the same time men have to undergo the good or evil consequence of their deeds in accordance with the strict principle of retribution.

As men are free agents, men are not being led in any direction by any other force than their own will, working, of course, under the Law of *Karma*. Men in their own desire and will determine their future. Guided by their desires and controlled by the cosmic law of just retribution men are at least on the vast ocean of existence. Desire is the key to their destiny, for they act in accordance with their desires.

Men's desires are innumerable and unlimited. Many of them conflict with others. Men have to choose some and reject others according to their upbringing and discipline in life. Men are endowed with a power of discrimination and control. With the help of this power men should bring about an orderly behaviour in the realm of choosing desire. Men have various kinds of desires. Some of them are enjoyment of spiritual freedom and peace.

The Hindus have realised that the whole of their life should not be devoted to the pursuit of wealth and pleasures, for the real man, the spirit within him, cannot be satisfied by that alone. Men do not live by bread alone.

The *Kathapanishad* has classified all the desires under two heads : namely, pleasures of the body and freedom of the soul. The story of the Hindu boy Nachiketa has emphasized the aspect of freedom of the soul and not the pleasures of the body. The Hindu preferred the freedom of the soul to the pleasure of the body :

"The Lord of Death offered to the little Hindu boy all the wealth, power and enjoyment possible in the world but wanted to keep the secret of life and death to himself. The boy refused to accept them because they did not promise lasting final and unconditional satisfaction to the soul, for which the Hindu boy yearned.

In another illustration of the Upanishad, Maitreyi, the wife of the royal priest, Yajnavalkya, refused to accept the gift of his wealth on the eve of his retirement from the householder simple because wealth gave no promise of immortality for which her soul yearned like that of retiring husband.

The young Gautama Buddha left his beautiful wife, newly born little son, royal palace and the kingdom to which he was heir, simply because he realised that these objcets of pleasures and power were also the sources of pain and did not ensure lasting happiness. It was enlightenment (Buddha-hood), for which he wondered from place to place and which he preferred to kingdom.

The tragedy of the modern western life is that the entire life is spent in the pursuit of these very material objects and pleasures which the little Hindu boy like Machiketa and Gautama Buddha and a Hindu woman like Maitreyi discarded as the unsatisfactory ends of life. The modern man is generally sad, unhappy, discontended and pessimistic. He does not know any higher purpose in life than merely acquiring of wealth and enjoymeni of sexual pleasures or drugs, which sap all his energy.

The Hindu saints did not altogether despise and hate wealth and enjoyment. They knew that acquisitiveness and sex were very powerful and motivating drives of man; but they also knew that unprincipled acquisition of wealth and unbridled enjoyment of sexual pleasures lead to bodily exhaustion, diseases and ruin as well as social disharmony and conflicts. They discovered that acquisition of wealth and enjoyment of pleasures, in order to remain healthy, have to be guided and controlled by moral principles such as truth, justice, honesty, sincerity, kindness, fellowship, moderation, social propriety, self-restraint, etc. They realised that observance of moral principles ensures greater individual happinese and social peace than unrestricted and unprinciplenp purpose of pursuing about wealth and pleasure. They knew that there is a deeper joy in life which is more abiding and more conducive to the soul than that which possessions and enjoyments can yield. They discovered that the source of this unconditional and abiding joy was within the heart of men.

To realise this abiding, unconditional and supreme happiness which springs up from within the heart of men when they have freed themselves from the pursuit of pleasures of the outside world, was considered to be the greatest object of human life.

Taking into consideration all the needs of life and so formulating a very comprehensive ideal of life, the Hindus have prescribed the following four objeets of life to be pursued by every man and woman :

(i) *Dharma*—or observance of moral principle which alone ensures individual happlness and social peace;
(ii) *Artha* —acquisition of wealth or the means that make life comfortable and ensure satisfactory worldly needs;
(iii) *Kama* —moderate and controlled enjoyment of sexual pleasures;
(iv) *Moksha*—Spiritual freedom and perfection in which an individual rises to the status of divinity here and now, not one of these ends exclusively but all of them together in life constitute the ideal of the Hindu culture.

XXXV

WHAT IS HINDU DHARMA ?

Manu defines *Dharma* as ten moral principles which every Hindu should follow in life so that all may live in peace. They are :

1. Patience and perseverance (*dhriti*)
2. forgiveness (*kshma*)
3. control of passion and ideas (*kama*)
4. abstinence from misappropriation of others' property (*astyam*)
5. cleanliness of body, mind and spirit (*shancha*)
6. control of the senses (*indciyanigraha*)
7. cultivation of reasonableness or use of reason (*dhi*)
8. acquirement of knowledge (*vidaya*)
9. truthfulness (*satya*); and
10. mastery over anger (*Akradha*)

It it a very comprehensive list of the most general principles which if adhered to in life will certainly make an individual life happy and prosperous will create a healthy social atmosphere in which everybody will feel secure and safe.

"Do not do to others what you do not wish to be done to you; and wish for others what you desire and long for yourself."— this is the essence of Hindu *dharma.* "Heed it all."

This principle of *Mahabharata* is what has been called the golden rule of the conduct. The world is a hell today because men do not conduct themselves on moral principles. They are sinful, greedy and unmindful of other's interest and well-being. The ultimate purpose of life is the "*Summun Bonum*" (spiritual perfection).

It is remarkable that the Hindu thought includes no concept of "rights". The Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches his friend Arjuna to perform the "duties" that are demanded by his order of life without expectation of any kind of personal and material gain or reward from any quarter. He regards the performance of one's duty without any gain or reward as the best form of worship of God. In the modern days everyone thinks of his rights than his duties. But rights must co-relate to duties.

What are these rights? "Rights" are simply a qualified word for man's individual and selfish interests, sublimated forms of man's animal desires and wants. According to the Hindus, it is natural for men to demand satisfaction of his natural desires and instincts. Why should man emphasise them, glorify them and plead for them as topmost priorities in life? Men are naturally prone to assert them. Men are more worried about their debts than their dues. Men's debts have been more elaborated in the Hindu concept of life than any in other religion of the world in bringing a striking balance between debts and dues :

(a) debt to forces of nature, for the invaluable gifts of air, water, food, etc. (it is a debt to God—*devarina*). In lieu of these gifts the Hindus make some offerings to the Gods who control nature as tokens of gratitude;

(b) debt to parents and to the society for having given birth to life and having brought up (*pitri-rina*). This debt is paid by bringing forth and bring up children and by contributing to the well-being of the family and society;

(c) debt to the teachers, discoverers-inventors who have brought civilisation to this stage and to whom men owe their knowledge. Men pay this debt by making some contribution to knowledge by writing books and by teaching others.

Keeping this in view the Hindus have prescribed the five types of offerings (*yajnas*) :

Yajnas (worship-offerings) are a very significant aspect of the Hindu culture. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Yajna* is the most essential duty of man.

It is not only a performance of certain rituals in which oblations of various kinds are offered to Fire God. This kind of *Yajna* is but a symbol of offering of what belongs to one to the whole for the benefit of all beings.

Hindu culture has, therefore, worked out a scheme of five kinds *Yajna* (offerings) to be followed by everyman who earns, has something to offer. They are :

1. *Deva-yajna*—offerings to the powers which control nature and its various phenomenon. Offerings to Gods are made in the oblations, prayers and gratitude for the great gifts of nature such as water, light and air.

2. *Rishi Yajna* (offerings to the saints) offerings to the great-seers and sages of wisdom. Offerings to the teachers and gurus who impart knowledge and to others who make new discoveries and inventions for the benefit of humanity.
3. *pitri-yajna* (offerings to the ancestors and parents). Offerings to the ancestors and parents consist in remembering them with love and affection the dead-ones and in being serviceable to the living parents and grand-parents. The Hindus celebrate the anniversaries of births and deaths of their ancestors and make offerings of their love, gratitude and good wishes to them on these occasions.

   All Hindus remember particularly their ancestors during (August-September months—*Mahalaya* festival) when they feed poor Brahmins on behalf of their ancestors. Offerings to other domestic creatures surrounding human beings in keeping friendly relations with them, the Hindus feed them.
4. *Bhuta yagna* : Offerings to the various species of creation that surround the Hindus in the fields, forests, in the form of evil spirits.
5. *Nri yajna* : Offerings to fellow human beings in exchange of gifts are made on special occasions.

Offerings to fellow-friends and other human beings consist in doing as much good as service to one's fellow beings as possible. Men must help the needy and should part with an appreciable amount of their income for charitable purposes.

In India almost every rich man thinks that it is his duty and privilege to build public wells, rest-houses for travellers, gardens, fountain, temples and ',hospitals for animals and birds. Almost every big city in India there is one or two, if not more, free lodging houses (*dharamshalas*) for travellers and pilgrims. Giving to the poor and needy as much as one can give is a part of the *yajna* (offerings) on certain occasions.

The Hindu kings and rich people are enjoined to give away all their possessions for the good of their society and as service to the poor; and they part with their wealth on such occasions with delight. In fact, in the Hindu culture, rich men and kings have vied with one another in giving away wealth. Greatness among the Hindus is measured by the capacity of giving and not by possession.

"A man should possess only as much as is necessary for his maintenance. He who accumulates more than he needs for the bare living is a thief." (*Bhagavad Gita* 7:14)

Hindu Charity

Charity has been enjoined upon their fellows by the religious scriptures of the Hindus. Manu has laid down definite rules to be followed for acquiring this religious merit. The grant of precious metals, especially gold and silver, estate buildings, cows is considered highly meritorious among the Hindus.

At the annual alms distribution ceremony by the ancient Hindu kings, five things such as money, cattle, grain, fruit and merchandise were given away to the needy people. These were obligatory for the Hindu kings. The Hindus are always ready to come to the succour of anyone, may be a stranger in distress and will grudge neither property, life nor reputation for this cause. Alms are frequently bestowed on the poor and the deserving sections of the community.

"Let them be charitable, according to their means, and to all poor, indignant, and naked persons who will not open their mouths to ask for the means of subsistence and have secluded themselves from the world."

"The wealth of those who have not given alms shall slip away like edible rice, corn, grain or consumable garments, blankets, sheets, shoes, shirts, etc. in charity. The liberality of the Hindus has particularly been commended. Alms-giving is the daily routine of a Hindu who strongly believes that such acts will atone for all his sins. The Hindu will gladly offer to the foreign tourists whenever they require anything to eat or drink."

Money and bread is frequently distributed to the poor on the fulfilment of a desire such as the birth of a son. Charity is also resorted to, to avert the evil effects of the stars, especially on solar or lunar eclipse days. The Hindus consider it highly meritorious to make arrangements for the drinking water on the roadside especially during the summer months. Large water pots are used for this purpose to store up water for serving to the thirsty people free of cost. The rich will spend huge amounts of money to dig wells and to construct a water tank for storing up water to be made available during the time of scarcity to both human beings and animals.

Charity to birds and animals

Strict believers in the transmigration of souls, the Hindus are particularly charitable towards birds and animals. Hospitals are constructed at several places for their treatment and maintenance. In Old Delhi the Jains have built the largest birds' hospital in the whole world. Cows and calves are clothed in fine coats buttoned and tied over ther chest and bellies during the cold months of winter.

Conclusion

The Hindus hold that the cosmic order as divine and therefore, just and properly maintained. Cosmic justice demands that there should be a strict and equitable retribution in nature. There is some arrangement in nature to keep strict balance of action and reaction. Cosmic agencies keep an account of all accounts of man's deed and place man in situation under which he can be rightly retributed.

Thus no one escapes or evades the good or evil consequences of his deeds accruing to him. If he does not meet the consequences in this life here now, he must do so in some other life, for he does not die completely (soul is eternal and not perishable, although physical body may die). The doer of the deeds, the personality of the doer, never dies. There would be chaos in the universe if one were to cease to exist without having undergone the consequences of his deeds. Death, being a common experience of every living being at some time, cannot be considered punishment for any deed.

Life here must presuppose a previous life to account for inequalities of circumstances and life-death must lead to another life to make the dying persons undergo retribution for what he has done in life.

Pre-existence and post-existence are implied in the law of justice. Re-birth or re-incarnation is thus not only a fact known directly to the seers but also a logical necessity. Reason and justice are both against the conception of life as limited in time. Kant, the great German philosopher, regarded immortality or continuity of life after death as a postulate of moral consciousness.

Some of the Western thinkers of modern times who have pondered over the problem of life from this point of view, have appreciated both these doctrine, namely "Reincarnation" and the "Law of Karma".

Why do people then come back to the physical world, when the spiritual world is superior to it ? It is because men have entertained many desires connected with the world which still remain to be fulfilled, and because men have incurred here many debts that men have to repay, and because men have to undergo the consequences of the deeds done in their previous lives on this physical world.

No one can escape the law of Karma :

"Even the Gods have to undergo the good and evil consequences of their acts". It is said in the *Mahabharata.* "There is no place in the universe—no mountain, no sky, no ocean, no heaven—where one does not undergo the good or evil consequences of the deeds done by one."

XXXVI

WHO IS A HINDU ?

A Hindu is one who is born of Hindu parents. As a matter of duty a Hindu observes a set of rules and rituals in life. He may show great laxity in his ceremonies. However, he performs certain basic duties. He may lack in his duties provided he is punctilious in ceremonies; he may show certain slackness in both provided he neglects neither entirely. But he does not do so, he will fall out of the "sponge", what is called Hinduism, so to speak and be no longer reckoned a Hindu.

And what will happen to him then ? The answer is—nothing overt, nothing violent, nothing immediate. Is there no authority before he can be summoned, no institution to judge him, no court of discipline to punish him, no penitent's bench on which to place him ? The answer is again in the negative. The only authority to punish or determine his fate is his own caste or community; the only judgment they can give is what they consider is "done away with" in their group, and the only sanction they have is the opinion of the fellow caste members of the same community.

There is, in fact, no external sanction for Hindu practice, no temple priest, no established religion mission to compel the Hindu "deviates" to accept the legal verdict. Hinduism, in that sense, rests essentially in group opinion of the caste to which he belongs. Not to be a Hindu means simply not being thought to be a Hindu, and this entails in the long run a series of other regulations which make life intolerable. The system works much as excommunication does.

Once these sentences are pronounced, their enforcement depends upon public opinion and their effectiveness declared as soon as belief in their efficacy wanes. But it is misleading to suppose that a man will be an outcaste among the Hindus. The cause of the latter is usually doctrinal and sometimes moral; the cause of the former is not likely to be either unless one regards morals as synonomous with custom. For it is a breach of custom more than anything else.

In Hinduism, then, it is simply a matter of custom—peculiar and complicated but still custom. The customs would not hold together if they are merely customs, and represent no values and the existence of values implies ideas to forumlate them. Does Hinduism, then, have neither negative nor positive standards ?

Hinduism contains values; but no one set of values, it possesses doctrines and ideas; but not one doctrine once for all delivered to the saints; it has not one decalogue; but many for its numerous sections. There are things which give strength to the pure automatism of custom, these are the things for which a Hindu will die, as the customs are things for which he lives. Even customs are so closely identified with the ideas which they express as to enter the "dying" class, as for an example, the practice of cow-veneration and refusal to eat beef, with the idea of the sacredness of life.

Thus the Hindus have a body of ideas, beliefs and values, which together make up the mysterious amophous entity which is called Hinduism. Thus Hinduism is regarded as a body of customs and a body of ideas, the two together having such pervasive power and defensive force as to absorb or to resist passively for centuries any system which comes in contact with it. It will be convenient to consider some of the basic customs separately in this book.

Reason and not Scripture to Guide Hindu Life

"*Buddhi*", reason or intelligence is the highest mental principle in man according to Hindu culture. It is this principle which determines the truth or falsity of a judgment on its purity and else depends the happiness and peace of life. It is on this working that there is agreement among all Hindus. Scriptures differ, as do emotions and traditions, but there is always an agreement upon what is reasonable. Hence the use of reason is regarded as one of the above mentioned ten principles of *dharma.*

The greatest prayer in the Vedas asks inspiration for an intelligence. In the Hindu culture, therefore, there has always been a great emphasis on being reasonable in all activities of life. The great saint, Vasistha advised his pupil, Rama in the *Yoga-vasistha*, to be always reasonable and never to accept and do what is not reasonable.

The most essential features of Hindu culture finds expression in the passage of the *Yogavasistha* :

"A reasonable statement even of a child, should be accepted; while the unreasonable ones are to be discarded like a straw, even though they are made by the creator himself."

It is further recorded :

"A devotee of reason should value the works even of ordinary person, provided they advance knowledge and are logical, and should throw away those of the saints, if they are not such.

"Such a sentimental person as continues to drink the filthy water of a well, simply because it was dug by his dear father, leaving aside the pure Ganges water available near at hand, is certainly a slave under other's control."

A Hindu may not be "supra-rational" but definitely he is not irrational. A Hindu always relies on reason more than on anything else. A Hindu closes his activities with the following prayer :

"May every being overcome difficulties, may everyone look for the good; may everyone have a purified reason, and may everyone be happy everywhere."

Three Sects of Hinduism

There are three important sects in Hinduism :

(i) *Vaishnavas* -- (worshippers of Lord Vishnu)
(ii) *Shaivas* — (worshippers of Lord Shiva); and
(iii) *Shaktas* — (worshippers of Shakti—power)

Bulk of the Hindus, particularly the Hindu masses belong to the several Vaishnavite and Shaivite sects. Most of the Hindus have the highest regards for the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* (these two are the great epics of the world).

The *Vaishnavas* feel especially drawn towards the *Bhagavata Puranas* which record the story of Lord Krishna's earlier life; the Shaivites feel similarly attracted towards the several *puranas* dealing with the life and exploits of Lord Shiva. Apart from these relatively popular texts, each of these sects and sub-sects has its own philosophical literature for inspiration and devotion.

XXXVII

HINDU CASTE

Origin

The basic Hindu social institution is caste. With the evolution of civilization and culture, food-gathering from the jungles was replaced by food-producing. Development of agriculture had been traced to the Indus Valley civilization dating around 3000 to 1700 B.C. The caste system was an outcome of the division of labour in the food-producing system where manufacture of agricultural implements, pottery, weaving, etc. became necessary developments for living. Under this system definite tasks were assigned to definite groups of people, and this process helped in avoiding the major evil of victimization of the working class.

This division of labour in the socio-economic development came to be known as caste system. As a result, assigning tasks to different sections of the society necessitated the recording of rules and norms for functioning of the society as a harmonious group. These records also were codified and modified the existing rituals and ceremonies prescribing new ones. This is the classical economic theory about the origin of Hindu caste system.

However, the origin of caste is still a matter of controversy. The caste is denoted by two terms, "*Varna*" (colour, character, nature and quality) and "*Jati*" (the form of human existence as determined by birth alone). The early Aryans (Hindus) were ruddy-faced and fair-skinned; the aborigines of India (the untouchables) were dark or very dark colour (*varna*).

Even today fairness in comparsion is much prized in the Hindu society. There is always rejoicing when a fair skinned baby is born in a dark complexioned Hindu family, and corresponding disappointment when the reverse happens.

There was a mutual seggregation between the "Aborigines" and the Aryans. The idea of "pollution of touch" separated these two communities. Then come another factor – conquest. The conquered communities where allowed to exist as a lower caste instead being admitted to a place of higher social recognition. There is finally, the factor of heredity (handing the culture down from the father to the son).

Thus the Hindus have organized their social life-pattern of four vocations ("*Chatur Varna*") and four stages of life (four *ashramas*) for each individual Hindu. According to Hindu culture the "caste system" was not to divide the Hindu society but to bring about its organizational unity and human solidarity. It was based on those fundamental, phychological and sociological principles, which, according to the Hindu philosophers, well-versed in Western and Hindu thought, "are fit for use in modern conditions also, and if properly applied, can solve all problems that are harrassing mankind today."

The word "*varna*" comes from a root "*vri*" (in Sanskrit) which means to choose'. *Varna* means choice. "*Varna Vyavastha*" means social institution based on free choice of vocations in accordance with one's vocational aptitude determined by heredity and vocational training, Its purpose is not to divide people into castes or classes, as it has degenerated into, as a result of India having been ruled by foreign powers for centuries. Its main purpose is to integrate the society into whole by giving each type of individual a suitable condition for living and working.

There is a great struggle for existence, power, wealth and superiority. All people seek for one and the same thing – wealth and power. The ancient Hindus who planned society on the basis of "*varna*" understood human nature better and planned a pattern of society in which there would be less chaos, less struggle and less dis-satisfaction. They found out that all people fell naturally into four categories—each of these categories had its distinctive vocational aptitudes, desires, pleasures and distinctive ways of living and dressing, etc.

"In (Hindu) religion there is no caste. A man from the highest caste and a man from the lowest caste may become a monk in India and the two castes become equal. The caste system is opposed to the religion of *Vedanta* (the concluding portion of the *Vedas*). Therefore, the Hindu caste is not a religious institution. Everyone made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down the Hindu religion and caste altogether and failed miserably."

When Vivekanada seeks to dissociate caste from religion, he identifies religion with the pursuit of '*moksha*' by the individual. "No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invest all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines of *Paramathika* and *Vyarahavika*."[1]

Still the story of the vast multitude of the "untouchables" (Harijans) in this ancient land of India is a miserable saga of shame and sorrow, harrassment and humiliation, oppresion and suppression, poverty and pity.

According to Prof. K.J. Parmar in his article "A 104 million Harijans seek a new Messiah" :

"The Harijan problem is not merely a social or religious or economic or political one. It is a complex problem involving many factors. It is a subtle and gigantic problem that has no parallel in the history of civilization. The plight of more than a hundred million Harijans is indeed a sad commentary on Hindu religion and culture."[2]

In another place Vivekananda makes the same view more poignant :

"I consider that the great sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well-educated, well-fed and well-cared for."

Mahatma Gandhi, the great champion of the Harijans, launched his greatest social reform movement for the liberation of the Harjans about 50 years ago and yet today they are the most persecuted people in the country.

The Central (Federal) and State Governments have been trying to give a rightful place to the Harijans in society through various drives for the abolition of untouchability, grant of legal aid, encouragement of inter-caste marriages, grant to non-official organisations engaged in welfare activities, scholarships for education, maintenance of hostels for the Harijans, pre-examination training centres, coaching-cum-guidance classes, overseas scholarships, allotment of land for residence and agriculture, house-building loans, Industrial training institutes, provision of drinking water, abolition of bonded labour, moratorium on rural debt, minimum wages for

[1] The Complete works of Vivekananda.

[2] Prof K.J. Parmar.

agricultural labourers, provision of text books for school children and so on.

It is the claim of the authorities of the Government of India that all out efforts are being made to ameliorate the conditions of Harijans and to give them a helping hand by opening new vistas of opportunity in all walks of life and enable them to take their rightful place in Indian society.

According to the constitutional directives, Harijans should account for 20 percent of posts in government services but the proportion of posts occupied by them comes to not more than 2 percent in class I, 4 percent in class II, 10 per cent in class III and 13 percent in class IV category of jobs. The national literacy average is 36 percent; while literacy is only 15 percent among the Harijans.

There are more than 100 million Harijans in a population of 620 million in India; nine Harijans out of every ten live in the village; and most of the time nobody spares a thought for the indignities and injustices that are heaped on the Harijans in the village almost continuously such as refusal of entry into Hindu temple, denial of the right to draw drinking water from the village well or even that to walk through a street inhabited by the so-called upper castes and so on.

The Harijans form the lowest layer of the Hindu society. Today, they are a social minority, though as a caste, they constitute the largest segment. They are indeed at a grave disadvantage.

"Besides, being at the base of the economic pyramid they are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. These two-fold disabilities, either of which can demoralise a people, make it impossible for them to become assertive so that they do not exercise fully even those rights and privileges to which they are entitled."

Indeed, the biggest handicap of the Harijans is that besides being the lowliest of the lowly, they are also the poorest of the poor. A vast majority of them are landless. In fact, proportionately, they are twice as much landless among them as among the rural population as a whole. Harijans are terrorized into working for the upper caste landlords for a pittance. Or they are attacked by irate land-holders when small patches of surplusland are allotted to them by a thoughtful State Government legislation. To make matters worse, the Harijans are in a minority everywhere. Indeed, in no state do they form more than 23 percent of the population. Despite free education and other inducements, the literacy rate among them remains half of the national average. No wonder despite 30 years of "reservation", the state of the Harijans in Government jobs remains as low as 2 percent in class I prestigious Government service. Indeed there are frequent complaints that better qualified candidates belonging to other sections of society are shut out from Government services and instituions of higher learning; while Harijans with much poorer qualifications are taken in and thereby causing a dilution of standards in much vital sections as medicine, engineering and technology.

The dilemma underlying this situation is difficult indeed; but it is worth-considering whether it will not be better to allow the reservation of jobs to lapse in 1980, the extended dead-line for this purpose. It will be far more rewarding for the country to concentrate indeed on giving the Harijan youth every possible help, if necessary, by opening high level institutions exclusively for the Harijans—to equip themselves educationally and otherwise to compete with others on an equal footing.

This helplessness is further aggravated by their inability to create a dynamic leadership to champion their cause with prudence and pertinacity. The emancipated ones are virtually lost to the community. Mr. Morarji Desai, Prime Minister of India took a decision to fix a five-year deadline for wiping out the stigma of untouchability.

Yet Harijans have contributed in no small measure to the national reconstruction, through persons like Dr. Ambedkar, eminent constitutional lawyer, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Union Minister, Government of India. Harijans are Government ministers, members of Parliament, legislators, doctors, engineers, scientists, professors, teachers, nurses, officers, clerks. They also occupy innumerable positions in various Private and Public Sector Undertakings. Nevertheless, "untouchability" is still practised all over the country in a virulent form. It is equally true that the Harijans have been speaking and not doing anything for the upliftment of their own lot. Speaking and not doing has become a habit with the untouchables in India.

It is by surnames the Hindus are identified as upper castes or Harijans if there is no apparently remarkable appearance in dress or otherwise. Of late there has been a revival of the movement to do away with the caste-based surnames. Though laudible, it is doubtful that the movement will be much of a success because most educated people cannot reconcile themselves to being addressed by their first names. Besides, doing away with the surnames by itself is not going to make much of a difference. Few in the South India are known by their surnames, but this does not make them less conscious of their castes. But many ridiculed the suggestions that by mere dropping of caste prefix to a name, the problem of casteism could be solved. "Such cosmetic treatment would not help" in eradicating the deep rooted social evil. For this, law alone would also not help. What is needed is a concerted fight, a crusade to bring about a change of heart. Yet there is another difficulty which only the Harijans can solve. It cannot be solved by the upper castes or by the government. The different castes among the Harijans have first to take away untouchability from among themselves. However, there is no reason for the higher castes to retain it. After all, the upper castes are or ought to be more enlightened than the Harijans. However, when all Harijan castes are united and will form a group which the upper caste Hindus in the villages may find it very difficult to oppress. When a Harijan occupies a position in Government service, in any profession, trade or commerce, he ceases to be untouchable. He no more moves among the untouchables. He moves among the high caste Hindus, occupying the same status in society. Among the so-called higher castes, in particular, the sense of belonging to a superior order is deeply embedded in the subconscious, colouring their response to day to day, routine matters. It also creates a strange bond of oneness among people be longing to the same caste or sub-caste to the alienation of others.

In a 44-page paper on "Caste, Classes and Parties in modern political development, with special reference to Kerala", the Marxist leader, Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, has stated that the caste factor is taken into account by all political parties, including "the party of the working class with the most advanced ideology"; while selecting their election candidates and making government ministerial appointments. All over India political elections are fought on caste basis with the affiliation of political parties. This is a fact of life in Indian socio-political life which many political leaders may not be so honest and forthright in admiting it. It is well known that caste and communal considerations are of paramount importance in politics at every level in India. That this should be the state of affairs after 30 years of independence reveals how little our national leaders have cared to support the evils of casteism from society.

Frequently recurring incidents of violence and attrocities against Harijans and Adivasis (tribals) are the most grim aspects of casteism. The fact that the police often connives with the upper castes in punishing the "low-born" is a matter of disgrace for all Hindus. Most local-level politicians, too, tend to take such offences lightly—thus encouraging the perpetrators of these offences.

Very recently a young Rajput of Bihar State, his bride, a Harijan of the Dussadh sub-caste, were beaten and stripped for having committed the "crime" of contracting a perfectly inter-caste legal marriage. While the wife kept captive by the local landlords, all belongings to the upper caste husband were taken away by landlords, the poor husband was also driven away with a towel around his waist. Such incidents should not be tolerated. And this calls not only for prompt action against the guilty but for scrupulous adherence to India's secularism in terms of both religion and caste by all the people of this great nation.

When it is high time for voluntary organisations and those who pride themselves as leaders of men and started a meaningful and uncompromising movement against this phenomenon of caste itself, the Christian leaders are introducing the caste system in their community. These so-called Christian leaders requested the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Morarji Desai to do his utmost in solving the long-standing problems of discrimination against Christians of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe origin in the matter of State-aids, concessions and reservations of Government posts. These persons remained untouchables, in the same social and economic stratum of society as the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. The Prime Minister was made aware that the discrimination was based on religious considerations alone, as State aids and concessions were given to Sikhs and Neo-Buddhists of the same category.

So it looks like, it is not the Hindu religion that is at fault for this kind of untouchability. "It is not," according to K. M. Panikkar, "Hindu religion that requires to be reorganized. It is Hindu society. The distribution is fundamental and failure of all movements so far has risen from the fact that this essential point had been overlooked . . . social organization is essentially unconnected with religion, through historical reasons . . .it cannot be identified with religion."[1]

Again he said: "There was no Hindu church to regulate Hindu society today. It is the result of unregulated growth, which became stunted at an early stage; and that institution of the Hindus are unconnected with their religion and are based essentially on law and custom."[2]

Dr. Radhakrishnan has expressed completely different opinion that the Hindus are tolerant and as such instead of annihilating the savage and the primitive, the barbarous and the backward; let them live as members of a low caste. In this respect we have to admit that the Hindus have adopted the only civilized course of decorum of democratic principle of life that each racial group should be permitted to adopt and develop the best in it without interfering with the advancement of other racial groups.

The untouchables were left free to develop themselves to their full mental faculty, now or at any historical time. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, caste divisions are based on individual temperament, which is not immutable. In the beginning there was only one caste. They were all Brahmins or all Sudras (Harijans).

A *Smriti* text says that one is born a Sudra and through purification he becomes a Brahmin. In the beginning all the men were Brahmins who later on got divided into several castes on account of their actions.

This is, in fact, an echo of what Sri Aurobindo says :

". . . We can certainly fasten no such absured idea on the words of the *Gita* as that it is a law of a man's nature that he shall follow with regard to his personal bent and capacities the profession or professions of his parents or his immediate or distant ancestors, the son of a doctor a doctor, the descendents of shoe-makers remain shoemakers to the end of measurable time; still less that by doing so, by this unintelligent and mechanical repitition of the law of another's nature without regard to his own individual call and qualities a man automatically furthers his own perfection and arrives at spiritual freedom."

Mahatma Gandhi would not, however, endorse such evil practices as untouchability even if they had the sanction of the Hindu Scriptures such the Vedas. In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi's attitude was rational and ethical. The leaders of the Hindu renaissance of whom Gandhi was the last important representative, were agreeable to their religion submitting itself to rational self examination and self-criticism. It was this attitude that enabled the launching of the movement for internal purification and reform of Hinduism.

---

1 & 2 : K.M. Panikkar : *"The Hindu View of life."*

The following statements of Mahatma Gandhi as quoted by Romain Rolland in his well-known book, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Publications divisions, New Delhi, Government of India 1969), give his poignant expression to this attitude :

"I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe the Bible, the Koran and the Zend-Avesta to be as divinely inspired as the Vedas (the Hindu Scriptures)...Hinduism is not a missionary religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets in the world...Hinduism tells everyone to worship God according to his own faith or dharma, and so it lives in peace with all religions."

"My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however, learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense."

Mahatma Gandhi and his followers abolished "untouchability" in the Indian Constitution, as a result the treatment of the Harijans and other low caste people by the higher caste Hindus has considerably changed. But further improvement is urgently required through a social revolution. Under the impact of democracy people belonging to the low-born castes and lower strata of society are becoming more self conscious and more insistent in regard to their rights. Mahatma Gandhi was the champion for their causes.

Lord Buddha led a campaign against this Hindu Caste system, it was also attacked by such great medieval saints as Guru Nanak, Ramanand and Kabir; still the institution of caste and its evil influence persists in Hindu society.

Mahatma Gandhi declared that "*varna dharma*" (caste system) is not a man-made law to be imposed or relaxed at his will. It is natural to man in his regenerate state. He may disregard it at his own cost. It is discovered in India and followed more or less faithfully for centuries.

He also explained this concept in the same book elsewhere :

"So far as I know anything at all of Hinduism, the meaning of '*varna*' (colour or caste) is incredibly simple. It simply means the following on the part of us all the hereditary and traditional calling of our forefathers, in so far as that traditional calling is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics, and this only for the purpose of earning one's livelihood. I regard this as the 'law of our being'."[1]

Mahatma Gandhi believed that the person who performs the duty of a Brahmin will easily become one in the next incarnation. But a translation from one varna to another in the present incarnation must result in a great deal of fraud.

It is clear that Mahatma Gandhi's approval to '*varna*' (caste) is basically religious and moral. Because life, according to Gandhiji is "duty and not a bundle of rights and privileges". And the duties of a man are to be fixed in accordance with his inherited characteristics and authorities. These characteristics constitute one's caste.

---

[1] *My varnashrama Dharma* : By M.K. Gandhi, Ed. Anand T. Hingorani, Bombay, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan(1965).

As a believer in the teachings of the *Bhagvad Gita*, Gandhiji holds the view that a man's performance of his duty without attachment to results is an act of worship that paves the way to salvation.

According to this interpretation of the Hindu tradition the aim of the Brahmin and the Sudra is the same; i.e. *Moksha* or self-realization, and not the realization of fame, riches and power.

A particular caste is not a mark of social status, it is merely an indication of the sort of duties a person is able to perform. Gandhiji condemns what he calls "the canker of superiority." He also explains his position :

"I have declared from the house tops that a man's caste is no matter for pride, that no superiority or inferiority attaches any of the four divisions of '*varna*'. A true Brahmin will feel it an honour to serve the lowest of the Sudra (Harijans). In fact, a Brahmin, to be a Brahmin, should have the qualities of a Kshatriya, a Vaishya and a Sudra—plus his own. Only he should predominantly be a man of divine knowledge. But caste today is in a shambles, and only heaven knows, or perhaps the Brahmins know, the final result.

Swami Vivekananda praises the Hindu ideal of the four '*varna*' with Brahmins at the top for its recognition of the importance of the life of learning, teaching and spiritual quest. He explains the significance of the ancient caste system in the following words :

"What caste really is not as one in a million understands. There is no country in the world without caste. In India from caste we reach to the point where there is no caste. Caste is based throughout on that principle. The plan in India is to make everybody "Brahmin", the Brahmin being the ideal of humanity. If you read the history of India, you will find that the attempts have always been made to raise the lower classes. Many are the classes that have been raised. Many more will follow till the whole will become "Brahmin". That is the plan."[1]

The Hindu caste is really unknown to most of the people of the world. Caste system cannot be said that it is altogether without a merit. Prof Humayun Kabir gives a balanced assessment of caste in the following words :

"Caste, which is a division of human beings into different grades, is repugnant to the non-Hindu mind. When one interprets it as an attempt to find a function for different stages of evolution of the human personality, it, however, attains a new significance. So long as caste was functional and not hereditory, it served as a principle of democracy, rather than otherwise. It was only when its fluidity was lost and, instead of being the expression of co-operation between different elements of one organism, it became the embodiment of sharply differentiated social strata, that caste became the national and social problem that it is today.

"In any case, caste attempted to find a place, however, inferior, for those who had been conquered as opposed to certain other types of colonisation or conquest, where the conquered are entirely segregated or even annihilated."[1]

---

[1] *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. V, Calcutta, Advaita Ashram, 1970.

K.M. Panikkar in his book said :

"...So subtle and intangible as scarcely to reveal its power over its own members so long as there is no transgression, the Hindu social system has been through the centuries most potent in holding every individual to his social delegations, religious duties as also to his economic and civic responsibilities.

"To it is due the perfection in craftsmanship brought about by a process of apprenticeship from father to son through perhaps two hundred generations. To it is due the protection of the widow and the orphan, the aged and the infirm, the under-privileged and the handicapped. To it is also due the steady pursuit of knowledge and culture through these classes who were, so to say, told off to devote themselves exclusively to it as students and teachers....Caste has large dark blots in its scheme and is to-day happily undermined to its foundation. But India owes all that is her distinctive identity almost exclusively to the protection offered by caste and by its unchallengable potentiality for good."[2]

MERITS OF CASTE SYSTEM

The word caste is a Portuguese term, which has been adopted by Europeans in general, to denote the different classes or tribes into which the Hindus are divided.

The Hindu social institution is far preserving and protecting the heritage, adapting it to new conditions and transmitting it to posterity. The factors of this organism are bound to each one in terms of condition of service and self-sacrifice. Thus the Hindu caste is simply a crystallized social institution; it has rendered its valuable service to the society as well.

The caste system has assigned to every individual his profession and employment by perpetuating the system from father to son, from generation to generation. It has prevented the possibility of any member of his decendants giving up the condition or pursuit which the Hindu law has assigned. The caste system has two aims in view : (a) to keep the occupational groups in their proper perspective; and (b) to maintain and protect the quality of life among the higher castes.

The caste system has survived for 3,000 years. In the *Rig Veda* caste was based on "the observance of ceremonial purity, especially in matters of marriage and food." However, the *Rig Veda* shows that caste consciousness was very mild or rather non-existent among the early Aryans. Later during the Epic period, the rule dividing the classes became more strict till finally India became a society of rigid social compartments.

Moreover, India was the home of many societies with different cultural and social traditions. To preserve their separate entity, barriers had to be set up. Foreign

[1] *Islam in India* by Prof. Humayun Kabir.

[2] K.M. Panikkar—*Hinduism and the Modern World*—Allahabad, Kitabistan (1938).

tribes invaded India and settled down in the country adapting Hindu customs. These people formed a new separate caste. When the Muslims entered India, they too closed their ranks in self-defence. Casteism is still prevalent among the Muslims of India. Casteism is not the monopoly of the Hindus. Among the Sikhs and the Muslims the evils of casteism are predominent even todate. However, the caste system in the initial stage of foreign invasion into India has preserved the Hindu society from disintegration. Foreign invasions did not greatly affect its culture. Caste has made division of labour rigid rule as regards marriages have preserved the purity of the Hindu race. Inspite of the divisions into castes and sub-castes, the community as a whole has remained unified. Each separate caste had a definite role to play to the welfare of the community in which he used to live as a member. Despite the fragmentation of society at a later stage a common religion and common custom and a common culture or tradition have been perpetuated over the centuries.

The Hindus hold their customs as sacred and indispensable; because being united with religion they partake of its sacred and inviolable quality. This contrivance of dividing the people into different castes or tribes, did not exlcusively belong to the Hindus. The wisest and most celebrated man of ancient times, Moses availed himself of the same institution for managing an intractable and rebellious race. The same distinction of castes existed amongst the Egyptians as amongst the Hindus in both; the trade and employment was immutable from father to son, and no man, in either country, could exercise two profession. Moses was educated in Egypt and must have procured the advantage which that system produced in maintaining good order; and therefore, in legislating for the people of God and establishing amongst them the division into tribe, he adopted the political system of the Egyptians and Arabians.

There was this difference, however, between the Egyptians and the Hindus that amongst the former, all occupations to the very lowest, were held equally in esteem, and it would have been highly censurable in any man to treat contemptously persons in any trade that contributed to the general good ; where as amongst the Hindus, there are certain employments to which prejudices or perhaps more powerful reasons have attached such ignomy, that those who practise them are universally despised and looked down upon by the higher castes.

The same division of people into tribes which we see among the Hindus are also present among the present day Arabs and probably they were common to all nations in ancient times. Ancient people of Athens were divided into four tribes or classes during the time of Cecrops and which were afterwards sub-divided into ten more. The great legislator, Solon respected this division and confirmed it in many particulars. Numa Pompilins saw no better method of quieting the jealousies and animosities which subsited amongst the people whom he governed, composed chiefly of Romans and Sabines, than the division of the whole into classes or castes. This division had the desired effect and these two communities when combined into one national mass forgot their discordant interests and thoughts no longer but what concerned the caste or class.

Those who were admirers of this plan of dividing a people into tribes could not but perceive that the distinction into classes is firmly established in any society so that order and good arrangements be introduced amongst them, together with the facility of directing them to good morale. It was with this view that the Egyptians were so strictly divided into tribes, because their wise legislators perceived that a person would learn to do that well which he had always had before his eyes, and which he had been constantly practising from his infancy.

This high perfection in art and manufacture would undoubtedly be attained by a people so patient and industrious as the Hindus.

The principle and perhaps the only cause which has kept the Hindu people so far behind other nations of the world when they have for so many ages preceeded in civiliazation was the domain of the British suzerainty in India; for their artists and workmen are endowed with dexterity and industry, perhaps in a superior degree to the Europeans. The Indian weavers, carpenters or goldsmith with their ordinary tools and implements than an European artisan could use their talents and skills for the most exquisite works of art and handicrafts.

In order to form a proper idea what the Hindus are capable of in arts and manufactures, if their natural industry were properly encouraged, it is only necessary to go into the workshops of one of their weavers or painters on cloth and to attend minutely to the humble machining with which they create the most beautiful muslins and matchless cloth, jewellery, handicrafts which are everywhere admired and constitute the finery of Europe.

However, the four-fold division of the Hindu caste is not based on birth alone. It is in fact derived from '*Guna*' (quality of life) and '*Karma*' (performance of deeds). Lord Krishna said in the Bhagavad Gita about 200 B.C. that the four-fold order was created by Him, according to the division of quality and active function: "Know me for the doer of those who are yet the imperishable non-doer." So the works of the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras are divided according to the qualities born of their own inner nature.

In the great Epic, the *Mahabharata* we read :

"Neither birth, nor the purificatory rites, nor learning nor off-spring can be considered as grounds for conferring upon one the dignity of born-again person (*Brahmin*). Indeed conduct is the only ground." This '*Varna*' (quality of life) slowly drifted towards the caste system which became more the main plank upon which the Hindu civilization was built-up.

Many Sub-Castes

Though there were originally four castes, we now find the presence of sub-castes and the number of such castes is multiplying everyday. The 1971 Indian Census Reports show the existence of at least three thousand rigidly exclusive in marriage and dinning and each claiming superiority over the other sub-castes.

The sub-castes have originated because of a birth of child where father belongs to the lower and the mother to the higher caste or *vice-versa*. The number of sub-castes was produced by the inter-mixture of various castes. Crossbreeds are so infinite that it is impossible to enumerate them all.

The sub-castes orginate in such fusion of castes. Sub-castes have been described according to the father's occupations whether they conceal or openly show themselves.

Minorities Commission

The Federal Government of India has appointed a minorities commission to safeguard the interests of religious and linguistic minorities to preserve secular traditions, promote national integration and remove a feeling of inequality and discrimination among the minorities.

The Commission will provide institutional arrangements for the effective enforcement and implementation of all the safeguards provided for minorities in the Constitution, in Central and State laws, and in Government policies and administrative schemes enunciated from time to time.

The Commission will consist of a Chairman and two other members whose term of office will not ordinarily exceed three years. The officer appointed as special officer in terms of Article 350 (B) of the Indian Constitution will function as the Secretary of the Commission.

The functions of the commission will be : (1) to evaluate the working of the various safeguards, provided in the Constitution for the protection of minorities and in laws passed by the Union and State Governments, (ii) to make recommendations with a view to ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of all the safeguards and the laws, (iii) to undertake a review of the implementation of the policies pursued by the Union and the State Governments with respect to the minorities, (iv) to look into specific complaints regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards for the minorities, (v) to conduct studies, research and analyses on the question of avoidance of discrimination against minorities, (vi) to suggest appropriate legal and welfare measures in respect of any minority to be undertaken by the Central or the State Governments, (vii) to serve as a national clearing house for information in respect of the condition of the minorities, and (viii) to make periodical reports at prescribed intervals to the government.

The headquarters of the Commission will be located in New Delhi. The appointment of the Minorities Commission follows from the Janata Party's promise of a civil rights commission in its election manifesto for the 1977 March Lok Sabha Election. It was then thought the commission after the one in the United States which the rights of the deprived sections, particularly the blacks—would be the sole body for safeguarding the rights and interests of all minorities, religious, caste or language, and that the existing office of special commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would be merged into it.

The function of the new commission are comprehensive and make the body the best institutional safeguard for minority rights and interests in the present conditions. The temptation to vest it with mandatory authority has been rightly resisted because it would have attracted the jurisdiction of the courts to the findings and the recommendations of the commission and thus landed the entire civil rights movement in the lap of avoidable litigation. The U.S. experience, in this context, is specially instructive.

Secondly, making its decisions mandatory would not have made much practical difference unless the persons charged with the implementation of the laws at the district levels are imbued with the spirit which informs the Government's decision to set up the commission. Indeed, the commission's role will be most useful as the administration's eyes and ears in ensuring the full and equal exercise of the rights of the minorities in respect of access to educational and vocational opportunities, recruitment to public service, housing, dispensation of justice, and so on. It should be able to invite specific complaints, investigate them speedily and without let or hindrance, and publicise its findings periodically. The purpose of the commission will be served only if the State administration act swiftly on its findings. For, they are the enforcing agencies under the Constitution. The Centre can only prod them and provide them with the necessary political will. If one recalls the Prime Minister's charge that State Governments had shown "slackness" and were "not eager to act fast" to provide protection to weaker sections of the society, then how effective the commission's recommendations could be is a debatable point.

The very nature of such a commission indicates that its recommendations would be ameliorative and preventive and as such it should have full-fledged and positive co-operation from all levels of administration in the States and at the Centre. However, a disturbing factor is that there is always a general slackness on the part of the officials in implementing the recommendations of such commissions. A few months ago, the Prime Minister had written to Chief Ministers strictly instructing them to take stringent preventive measures against attrocities committed on Harijans and other weaker sections of the society. Apart from the dismal failure on the part of the State Governments to act expeditiously to bring sanity within the ranks of the higher castes, there has also been slackness in creating a feeling of security among those socially down-trodden and economically oppressed. Cases of individual terrorism and instances of mass attacks on the backward communities in remotest area of the country continue to trickle in, despite official denials sometimes. If such incidents of personal violence against the other weaker sections of the society not true, there could be no occasion for the Prime Minister to offer his service to lead a *Satyagraha* for securing the rights of victims of violence. In effect all this spotlights in sharp focus the contours of the socio-economic conditions of a secular republic. Hence while building up effective social resistance against social inequality it is also a political necessity that a dynamic economic welfare programme should be chalked out and dovetailed with other legislative measures to safegurad the inherent rights of the minorities.

All the movements for the removal of untouchability were sponsored by the upper caste Hindus. They offered *Satyagraha* whenever they felt it was necessary. Why did not Gandhiji organize the Harijans to fight for their own undoubted rights? The great leader of India knew with what problem and material he had been dealing. Gandhiji knew that if the Harijans were brought in the struggle for the removal of untouchability, they would be exposed in the villages to the wrath of the higher castes from which even the Government would not even protect them. In the U.S.A., the blacks now have all the legal rights as the whites. But, are they safe from the tyranny of the whites? In India too there is a law against the practice of untouchability. The State Governments are also keen that the law must be enforced strictly. But in actual life, it does not provide safety to the Harijans in the villages

XXXVIII

THE HINDU LEGEND CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF CASTE

According to the oldest hymn in the Purushasukta of the Rig Veda, the Brahmins came out of the head of Brahma (the God of Creation) and they draw their names from '*Brahma*' (*Brahman* or *Brahmin*); the *Kshatriya* from his arms; the Vaishya his belly and the Sudras from his feet.

The Brahmins being the first, and emanating from the noblest part of the Common Father, consider themselves exclusively entitled to that sacred name. The Brahmins were the first to comprehend *Brahma* in perfection, and had the clearest conception of this great being. They along have the distinguished privilege of pursuing the study of spiritual scriptures.

But by mere human birth, a Brahmin is no better than a Sudra and by birth alone he posses nothing that can raise him above the level of other men. It is only after the "ceremony of initiation" (which is called "twice-born") he becomes a "*dwija*" (a Brahmin). As a Brahmin he belongs to the superior caste.

The first birth admits him to the common rank of mortals; the second birth which he owes to the "ceremony of initiation" or the sacred thread ceremony ("tripple-cord") exaults him to the lofty rank of the tribe to which he belongs.

Sub-Castes Among the Brahmins

There are seven distinctive sub-castes within the Brahmins and this has a special origin from the several famous '*Rishis*' or penitents. The names of seven '*Rishis*' are held sacred and invoked by all the people of India. They are inculcated on their children and are as follows :

1. Kasyapa
2. Atri
3. Bharadwaja
4. Gautama
5. Viswamitra
6. Jamadagni, and
7. Vasista.

The seven penitents, after giving an example on earth of all the virtues, were transfigured into heaven, where they still hold their place among the most brilliant of the stars—a constellation of seven stars ("*Saptarshi mandal*"). Those who have a desire to see them, have only to look up to the seven stars in the great bear; for these are no other than the seven famous penitents (*Rishis*) themselves ; not emblemetically, but in spirit reality. And it is believed that without ceasing to sparkle in the firmament ; they can descend, and actually do play an occasional visit to the earth to know what is happening to their children. The idea of preserving the memory of their great man and of making them immortal by assigning them a place among the constellations which shine in the sky, appears to be common to all ancient Brahmin tribes.

There is a puzzling objection frequently urged against the Brahmins. If it is to be the ceremony of the sacred thread (tripple cord), it is asked, that creates the Brahmins, how come the wives of the Brahmins, who do not undergo that ceremony, to be anything but Sudras? Brahmins are, therefore, married to wives, not belonging to the Brahmin caste; a principle held sacred and inviolable amongst all Hindus. The answer is that the Brahmins have been guided on this particular matter by ancient usuages and customs of the caste from time immemorial. A Brahmin girl before marriage and at her attainment of puberty, has to undergo a purification ceremony. At the end of this period, she is administered "*Pancha Karyam*" (five substances derived from cow).* She also is elevated to the higher rank in the Brahmin family. During this period of purification in some community among the Brahmins the nose of the girl is bored with diamond nose-ring. This custom is predominantly prevalent among the Brahmins of South India.

According to the ancient Hindu Scriptures the caste system was wholly the work of God. It is easy to understand that the story of casteism is a pure allegory. It has established the rank among the different caste and also their functions in relations to each other. The Brahmins, engaged in spiritual concerns of life, must have sprung from the head of the Creator. Power being the attribute of the warriors who are ordained to defend the land from whence could their origin be derived but from the shoulder and arms of Brahma (God of creation). The merchants or traders

---

**Pancha-Karyam* : Means five substances from the body of the cow "namely, milk, butter, yogurt, dung and urine—all mixed together.

solely occupied in providing food, clothing and other important daily provisions of life were no less appropriately drawn from the belly of the Creator; and the plodding Sudras, doomed to the humble drudgery of the field, were shaken out of His feet.

Nevertheless, the whole social institution of caste is here conceived symbolically as one human being—the "body social," as it is said—with its limbs representing the social classes based on the principle of division of labour.

There is still another story about the origin of the caste system. After the end of the universal deluge, a new world has been made. This is similar to the story distinctly known to Moses that Noah saved God's people. The Hindus believed that Manu saved the Hindus from the flood. After the flood Manu, the greatest Hindu law-giver, discriminated men into different castes which still prevails among the Hindus. The name, "*Manu*" seems to point out the ancient Egyptian name Menes and the great name of the Bible Noah, who stands the highest in consideration and the most venerable of mankind after Adam.

Quality of Brahmins

The simple and innocent manners of these early Brahmins, their contempt of honours and wealth, their moral virtues and above all, their temperance raised them into respect amongst Kings and their subjects. For even the monarch did not conceive himself degraded by paying such homage to the Brahmins as he would not have exacted from his own subjects for himself.

The Brahmins of the present day are their descendants. The present race, though altogether degenerate from the virtue of their ancestors still preserve a great deal of their character and habits, in as much as they show to the present a predilection for retirement and seclusion from the bustle of the world, selecting for their residence remote villages, into which they permit no person of any other caste to enter. These villages, inhabited by none but Brahmins, one in great numbers in different divisions of this sub-continent, and one generally described under the name of superior villager. But in recent times with the fast development of industialization and urbanization, this pattern of secluded life for the Brahmins no longer holds true. They have individual identity from the rest of the caste. They have in fact merged in the common crowd of habitants—nobody knows who is a Brahmin, a Kshatriya or a Vaishya or a Sudra. But still one can easily identify them by their manners, by their frequent attendance to feasts and fasts as well as various Hindu festivals. They are still known by their daily ablutions and nature as well as subject of their sacrifice, and above all, their scrupulous abstinence from beef, pork and other prohibited products of nature (as such onion, garlic, etc.) to which their prejudices and superstitions have attached some idea of impurity.

In general the Brahmins seek for knowledge and enlightenment and would be quite happy and contended if society offered them opportunity to pursue knowledge unhampered and to give it to others. The Brahmins do not care for power and wealth as long as they are allowed by the society to go on with their own hobby of getting more and more knowledge and spreading it to others for betterment of quality life.

What they would like to pursue are books, laboratories for research, apparatus for observation and other facilities for investigation and research. Their main recreation consists in contemplation of God and communion with nature. They hanker more for respect, reverence and public esteem than for anything else. The main end of their life is self-realization and learning for the attainment of high character. They do not want to rule, but they can guide the rulers of the nation. They cannot be rich and powerful nor do they want to be.

Thus the head of *Brahma* from which the Brahmins are created is the seat of thought and speech; the Brahmins. therefore, are created to be teachers and instructors, philosophers, guide and friend of mankind.

The shoulder and the arms are the symbol of valour and strengh, the Kshatriya's mission in this world is to carry weapon and protect people and defend the territorial integrity of the King and his kingdom.

Kshatriyas

Now we discuss the second type of people who love and seek power. They are men of action rather than men of knowledge. By nature and training they are to administer and execute policies in the affairs of administration and defence of the land. Their main livelihood can be of military or executive positions. Their possessions are weapons and articles of pomp and show and their recreations are various kinds of sports and games. Their main source of strength is military valour. They fail when they wrongly select a teaching profession.

Vaishyas

The third type of people are those who neither care for knowledge nor for power but for wealth and property. By temperament they are acquisitive, greedy and commercial. Their main source of income is trade, profit and speculation in the share-market. Their main craving is for wealth and their main recreation lies in trails of luck, gambling, horse-racing and in making plans that will bring more and more money, gold and precious stones. They excel in accounting, calculating and planning strategy for business ventures. They can very well manage economic affairs, banking operations, industrial enterprises, agricultural development, trade and commerce. Their main source of strength is their wealth and their capacity to amass wealth.

Sudras

There is a fourth type of people who are born with a low intelligence quotient and consequently with little or no interest in science, technology, administration, commerce or trade. By temperament they are unambitious, lazy and ease-loving, but they are capable of working hard physically when they are made to work by others.

They exert effort when only they need in order to earn their bare livelihood. Their main sources of income is wage for their family. Their main source of income is from their unskilled or semi-skilled labour. Their main source of recreation is gross sensual and sexual pleasures, intoxicating drugs and alcohol. Their principal source of strength lies in their capacity to work with physical and manual labour.

They are incapable of fitting into jobs which require much thinking, executive planning and organising capability. They can work only under the guidance, control and command of others. All these people are the organic parts of the society. That is why the Rig Veda compared them to the head, hands, abdomen and legs of human body.

Indian Social thinkers organised an order of society in which each of these types of people mentioned above, could find a suitable vocation for carrying on with their work that was according to their interest, and in accordance with the best that each can give. Consequent upon performing its duty in the best way, heredity, training, personal choice and social selection—all played their part in assigning a particular profession, which was called a '*varna*'.

The four typical professions, having innumerable varieties with each were called the learned, executive, commercial and labouring professions, and the four types engaged in them, were called the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras.

Each of them was a compliment to the rest. They were organically related to each other as were the various parts of the body. There was no reason for conflict and class war, as each type had to give something to other and also to get something from others as much of what it needed for its life and welfare. No professional class was self-sufficient; yet each class was indispensable. Each class had initiative enough to contribute its best to the society as a whole. Gerald Heard (in his book, "Man, the Master"), a great American thinker and writer who has studied the Hindu social system, called it "Organic democracy", and suggested in his said work that it was the type of democracy that world as a whole needed today."

As a rule people have organised themselves in a living and not a mechanical relationship; where instead of all men being said to be equal, which is a lie, all men are known to be of equal in value. We find the position in which their potential contribution could be released and their essential growth pursued.

Gerald Heard called the four "*Varnas*" by the names—Seers (Brahmins), Politicians (Kshatriyas), technicians (Vaishyas) and coherers (Sudras). These four classes are distinguished by unmistakable psychological characteristics which suit them to their particular purpose, function and place. It is this organization that made the Hindu society stable, efficient and strong. It has produced in scholars, warriors, administrators and producers of wealth.

P.D. Ouspensky ("A New Model of the Universe"—page 447), a thoughtful Western writer, is of the opinion that "all the most brilliant periods of history, without exception, were periods in which the social order approached caste system."

He thinks that the caste system (*Varna-Vyavastha*) is a natural division of society. Whether people wish it or not, whether they recognize it or not, they are divided into four castes. There are Brahmins, there are Kshatryas, there are Vaishyas and there are Sudras. No human legislation, no philosophical intricacies. no pseudo-science and no forms of terror can abolish this fact. And the normal functioning and development of human societies are possible only if this fact is recognized and acted on.

Summary

The Hindu society is divided into four castes and it has prescribed for each caste wholly fixed professions and activities. At the head, stand the Brahmins; they represent the priestly and teacher class. They have for their work, the teaching and study of the Vedas, the offering of sacrifices for themselves and for others and receiving and giving of alms.

The Kshatriyas or the warrior class have for their duty, the protection of the people, the giving of alms, the offering of sacrifices and the study of the Vedas.

To the Vaishyas or the traders, the breeding of cattle, trade and agriculture have been assigned as their work, but along with these, giving of alms, offerings of sacrifices and study of the Scriptures are part of their duties.

The Sudras, finally have only one work and that is to serve the other three castes.

The Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas—these three castes have two births and there is no fifth caste, so it is said by Manu. According to the Hindu Law-giver, Manu, every caste was assigned a fixed calling. But this cannot maintian in its exclusive form; people permitted at first the high caste to follow the mode of life of the caste next in order in the system, but people could not stop there and allowed, evidently, under pressure of circumstances, the higher castes to adopt the professions which were originally considered proper for the lower ones. Thus a Brahmin may, if he can not earn his living by the work proper to his own caste or by that of the warrior caste, adopt the life of a Vaishya and earn his livelihood by agriculture and rearing cattle or trade.

In practice, people went further that even among the Brahmins of ancient time the ways of earning livlihood were no less manifold than they are today. Today members of many castes can choose a wide range of occupations and the public services in particular are open to all; but it would still be true to say that in the whole Hindu society caste is an indication of occupation. Not all Brahmins are priests; but all priests are Brahmins. An agricultural labourer is not likely to be a successful shopkeeper or money-lender a successful farmer. The cutting across of traditional occupations is most obvious in the towns and cities and particularly amongst those who have in some degree westernized. Still there is a visible bias towards the modern version of the hereditary occuptions. The Brahmins are drawn towards intellectual pursuits, the Kshatriyas to military services, the Vaishyas to commerce and industry and Sudras to the menial services of the community.

XXXIX

DUTIES OF FOUR CASTES

There are two aspects of occupation : First duty and secondly, the means of livelihood.

The lawful occupation of the Brahmins were "studying, teaching, sacrificing for himself—sacrificing for others, giving gifts and receiving gifts."

Besides the above prescribed duties, the Brahmins act as advisers to the king and occupy important positions in the judiciary. In consultation with the Brahmins, the king used to administer justice. The king used to appoint the Brahmins as the royal priests who were also astrologers. The Brahmins were highly exhaulted. They are well versed in the legal system as well as politics. The Brahmins were learned, noble. handsome and virtuous in disposition. The Brahmins used to live righteously and were austere in their habits. With the assistance of the Brahmins, the king used to fulfil his religious and spiritual duties. The king took heed of that which the Brahmin astrologer interpreted concerning omens for the king. It is thus observed that when a Brahmin had a large number of family members and it became impossible for him to maintain them by his lawful occupation, he would follow the vocation of Kshatriya by taking up arms or joining the defence forces; he would follow trade and commerce which were the avocations of the next immediate castes, but under no circumstances should he follow the profession of a Sudra.

In times of distress, a Brahmin may resort to agriculture, menial service, money lending. carrying paddy on carts, collecting fare from ferry boat, selling grains or collecting wood from the forest or digging wells or taking protection under the king's alms or finally living on begging. Even when he fails to maintain him self by menial work, he has to pass three days on fast and himself will not take food from the "untouchables" still. In times of distress, it is permissible to go down in the hierachy of caste, because he has to maintain somehow during the period of distress. He will, however, have to resist to accept the occupation of a Sudra.

As soon as he is able to tide over the crisis of distressing condition, he shall purify himself by explations and confine once again himself to his own pursuits of life.

The chief duty of the Kshatriyas is the protection of the subjects. They are the defenders of the land—the soldiers. In time of distress, a Kshatriya may follow the occupation of a Vaishya. Those who are unable to live by their own occupation may adopt that of the next inferior caste, but never of a higher caste.

The lawful occupation of the Vaishyas are usury, agriculture, trade and tending of the cattle. A Vaishya who is unable to subsist by his own duties may even maintain himself by a Sudra's mode of life. avoiding, however, acts of forbidden to him, and he should give it up when he is able to do so.

For a Sudra servicing the "twice-born", unable to live by that, he may become a trader, or may live by various arts promoting the good of the "twice-born". Most of the handicrafts profession and almost all the handicrafts business with arts and labour which are indispensable to civilized society belong to the Sudra community. All the cottage industries in India flourished because of the devotion and hard work of the Sudras. The only occupation the Lord presented to the Sudras is to serve those three higher castes meekly. But a Sudra being unable to find a service with the "twice-born" and threatened with the loss of his sons and wife through hunger may maintain himself by handicrafts. But the dwellings of the Sudras shall be outside the villages. They live very meagrely and their wealth shall be dogs and donkeys or pigs, etc. Their dress shall be the garments of the dead left behind at the burning ghat by the upper caste Hindus. They shall eat food from broken dishes, plastic and glass shall be their ornaments and they must always wander from place to place. Their food shall be given to them by others. At night they shall not walk in village and in town lest they are taken as thieves. They cannot enter the temple of the upper caste Hindus. They live in huts and dilapidated houses.

Of all the Hindus, the Brahmins strive the most to keep up the feeling of outward and inward purity. Hence their ablutions are most frequent, and their abstinence most vigorous, not only from all kinds of animal foods but even from many of the simpler agricultural produce of nature like onions and garlics, etc., which their superstitions and prejudices lead them to consider as impure or capable of communicating defilement. It is chiefly this unfailing sentiment of propriety which raises the high caste into respect and reverence which the Hindu Brahmins enjoy in India.

Explusions From castes

An expulsion from the caste is the penalty inflicted on those who are guilty of infringing the accustomed rules, or of any other offence which would bring disgrace on the caste. It is a kind of civil excommunication which debars the unhappy object of it from all intercourse whatever with his fellow creatures. He is a man, as it were dead to the world. He is no longer in the society of men. By losing his caste, the Hindu is bereft of friends and relations, and often of wife and children, who will rather forsake him, than share in his miserable lot. No one dares to eat with him, or even to pour him out a drop of water. If he has marriagable daughters, they are shunned. No other girl can be approached by his son for marriage. Whenever he appears, he is scorned and pointed at as an outcast. If he sinks under the grievous curse, his body is suffered to rot on the place where he dies, even if, in losing his caste, he could descend into an inferior one, the evil would be less. But he has no such resources. A Sudra, little scrupulous as he is about honour or delicacy, would scorn to give his daughter in marriage even to a Brahmin thus degraded. If he cannot re-establish himself in his own caste, he must sink into the infamous tribe of the Muslims or Christians.

A Hindu of high caste or low caste may be dishonest and a cheat at times, but a Hindu fallen out grace of his caste by conversion to Christianity or Islam has always the reputation of a rogue.

The expulsion from the caste is frequently put in force without much ceremony; sometimes even out of hatred or caprice. These cases happen when individuals from some motive, refuse to assist at the marriages or funerals of any one of their relations or friends or to invite on such occasions of their own, those that have a right to be present.

Persons excluded in the way never fail to commence proceedings against those who have offered them the insult, demanding reparation for their wounded honour. Such instances are commonly settled by arbitration, and in that case the exclusion is not attended with the hateful and ruinous consequences. It is not necessary that offences against the usages of the caste should either intentional or of great magnitude. It happened that some Brahmins who live in the neighbourhood, having been convicted of eating at a public restaurant with a Sudra, disguised as a Brahmin were all ejected from the caste and did not regain admission into it without undergoing an infinite number of ceremonies both trouble-some and expensive. But this does not happen these days so often.

Another interesting incident of serious complexity is narrated below :

Eleven Brahmins, while travelling, passed through a country desolated by war, arrived at length, exhausted by hunger and fatigue, at a village, which contrary to their expectations, they found deserted.

They had brought with them a small portion of rice, but they could find nothing to boil it in; but the utensils that were in the house belonged to a Sudra.

To Brahmins, even to touch them would have been a defilement almost impossible to efface. But being pressed with hunger they bound one another to secrecy by an oath, and then boiled their rice in one of the pots, which they had previously washed a hundred and one time. One of them alone abstained from the feast, and as soon as they reached their home, he accused the other ten Brahmins before the Chief Brahmin of the village.

The rumours quickly spread. An assembly was held to look into this complaint against ten Brahmins who violated the social custom. The delinquents were also summoned and compelled to appear for testifying the truth. They had been already appraised of the difficulty in which they were likely to be involved, and when called upon to answer the charges they unanimously protested and they had previously consulted that it was the accuser only that was guilty of the fault which had laid to their charges. Which side was to be believed ? Was the testimony of one to be taken against that of ten ? The result was that the ten Brahmins were declared innocent and the accuser, being found guilty, was expelled with ignominy from the tribe by the Chief Brahmin who thought scarcely doubtful of his innocence, yet could not help. However, this is an extreme case ; but rigours have not been wiped out completely.

Restoration to the Original Caste

After expulsion from the caste, the individual may be reinstated at times. When the expulsion has proceeded from his relations, the culprit, after gaining the principal members, prostrates himself in a humble posture before his kindred assembled on the occasion. He then submits himself to the severe rebukes, blows and other corporal chastisement; fine; shedding tears of contriction, making solemn promise to efface the infamous stain and stigma of his expulsion from the caste by his future good conduct.

Prostration ("*Sashtangam*") should touch the eight organs of the body (feet, knees, belly, head, arms) to the ground. This technique of restoration is also found in the Book of Genesis, that Abraham ran to meet them from the tent door "and bowed himself towards the ground" (Genesis : 18:2). Lot also "rose up and bowed himself with his face towards the ground." (Gen. 19:1). In the interview with his brother, Esau, Jacob "bowed himself to the ground seven times" (Gen 33:3).

When a man is expelled from his caste for reasons of great moment, they sometimes slightly burn his tongues with a piece of gold made hot. They likewise apply to different parts of the body iron-stamps heated to redness, which impress indelible marks upon the skin. In some parts, they compelled the culprit to walk on burning saw-dust. If the culprit can run away from his funneral, the community would perform the funeral of his effigy.

The purification for restoration is complete only with a drink of "*Panchakaryam*". When cow's urine is used externally, it removes external impurity and when taken internally, it cleanses all within; this is the firm belief of the Hindus of rural India. When a young girl attains her puberty, she is considered impure and she is administerhd "*Panchkaryam*" at the end of the period of defilement for her purification from uncleanliness of puberty.

But there are certain offences, however, so heinous in the eyes of the Hindus as to leave no scope of restoration to those who have been excluded from their caste for eating beef. It is the belief among the Hindus that wickedness has entered into his heart once a man has eaten beef as a result of conversion either to Islam or Christianity. Cow is considered holy because the vehicle of Lord Krishna was cow and Lord Krishna used to tend the flock of cows. Cow is the noblest among the domesticated animals. Cow provides all necessary inputs for living and development of agricultural production. For both economic and religious convictions of the Hindus, cow is treated with respect as it is commonly called "*Gomata*" (Mother Cow).

If the culprit is circumscised and has renounced the caste and its related customs, it is a prominent crime, which could by no means admit forgiveness. This sin cannot be redeemed by presents or fines or by the taking of "*Panchkaryam*".

But whatever the caste may be from which one has been expelled, much costs and many cermonies are required to reinstate him. Even when he has regained his place, he never overcomes the scandal. The blot continuously remains; and in any altercation he may fall into his former misfortune.

The Attitude of the Hindus Towards Conversion

The general Hindu attitude towards proclamation of the Gospel which results in conversion of the Hindus from their religion to Christianity is decidedly negative. Severely basic objections to Hindu conversions to Christian faith have been put forth in the post independence era by various State legislations.

"There is no fundamental right guaranteed under the Constitution to a citizen to convert another person to one's own religion", the Supreme Court ruled on two cases that came up before the Court from Madhya Prndesh and Orissa on the question of religious conversion as on 17 January 1977.

If a person purposely undertakes the conversion of another person to his religion as distinguished from his effort to transmit or spread the tenets of his religion, that would impinge on the "freedom of conscience" guaranteed to all the citizens of India alike under Article 25 of the Constitution.

This Supreme Court ruling was given by a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Court headed by Chief Justice A.N. Roy, while upholding the constitutional validity of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, which provided prohibition of conversion from one religion to another by use of force or allurement, or by fraudulent means and punishment for forcible conversion from one religion to another.

The Supreme Court held that "it has to be remembered that Article 25 : (1) guarantees "freedom of conscience" to every citizen, and (2) not to the followers of one particular religion, that, in turn (3) postulates that there is no fundamental right to convert another person to one's own religion."

Propagation and conversion

This ruling made a sharp distinction between proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and making converts in the name of Christ from the Hindu communities. It is reaffirmed that the Indian Christian is guaranteed while the right to "Proslytize" is not included in the right to propagate religion as guaranteed in the Constitution.

No one in fact, would object to conversion (to change) in politics, in a new attitude to science, history or philosophy of life. But the objections to religious conversion to Christianity seem to be entirely valid to the constitutional pundits of India. To the Hindus, in general, Christianity is a foreign religion and conversion to Christian faith involves the vital abandonment of Hindu culture. Christian conversions have tended to disrupt the traditional patterns of family life and social behaviour.

Invariably, the conversion of a Hindu to Christian faith has led to excommunication from his own community and frequently to expulsion from the total family to which originally he belonged. It has been time and again stated that conversion to Christian faith leads to the virtual degeneration and demoralization to the Hindu converts.

Gandhiji once wrote in his *Harijian* (May 11, 1935) : "In Hindu household the advent of a missionary has meant the disruption of the family, coming in the wake of change of dress, manners, language, food and drink."

Motives

The Christian converts have tended to become "denationalized" and "westernized"; they not only give up their traditional faith but also national culture and influence, thought and philosophy.

Moreover, Christian conversion is frequently promoted by unethical or at least questionable methods. It has been an open secret that the foreign evangelical and Catholic missionaries, medical, social and educational work has not been conducted out of humanitarian considerations but with ulterior motives, namely the exploitation for the Hindu conversions to Christian faith.

Mass conversion among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in particular during the drought famine or flood by the dishonest and corrupt foreign missionaries in the way of distribution of cash or doles to the victims of millions in number, has been the most aggressive method of denuding the Hindus over the years.

Legal Process

Thus the standpoint of the Supreme Court ruling is that the religion of any person shall be personal, to be that in which he was born and officially he cannot change his religion until he attains the age of 21 years.

So a minor below 21 years cannot change his formal religion without the sanction from the State authority. A change of religion in the absence of official sanction constitutes a penal offence : "No person shall convert another person from that person's religious faith to his own except before a District Magistrate".

The main object of such a ruling is to stop completely the Christian conversions which are being carried on unabated even today by means of allurement and unethical means.

The Christians believe that conversion takes place by the wonder working of the Holy Spirit. It is the duty of each Christian to proclaim the Gospel. "Let the earth hear His voice". The law requires a person wishing to change his religion under the spell of the Holy Spirit has to file an affidavit before the District Magistrate and then an enquiry would be ordered to determine whether the individual was acting of his true will and his own accord.

A person below the age of 21 years is not in any way permitted to file an affidavit. These regulations primarily aim at preserving the status quo and making it impossible for anyone to change his religion. This means that any conversion of Hindu minor to Christian faith shall not be recognized by the law of the land.

Who Can Convert ?

Under the regulations only ordained pastors of a church so engaged in converting people to Christian faith would have to secure a valid and lawful license from the local District Magistrate. A register of conversions should be maintained for communication to the authorities : a prospective convert would have to make a declaration of his intention to the District Magistrate one month prior to the actual date of conversion : the license holder of the church and the convert would be required within there months after the conversion (baptism) to give all necessary particulars regarding the conversion.

Finally, it means that the conversion of a Hindu to Christian faith is entirely dependent on the discretion of the District Magistrate. Any pastor or church so engaged in converting people which does not hold a valid license for this purpose from the local District Magistrate shall be penalized under the penal code.

A Hindu wife is entitled to live separately from her husband without forfeiting her claim to maintenance if her husband has been converted from Hinduism to Christianity. The Maintenance Act of 1956 would certainly constitute a serious obstacle to a husband contemplating changing his religion if his wife is critical of his conversion to Christian faith.

Similarly, a Hindu wife shall not be entitled to separate residence and maintenance from her husband if she ceases to be a Hindu.

Property

The right to inherit property is automatically denied to a Hindu convert. If a Hindu has ceased or ceases to be Hindu by conversion to Christian faith, children born to him or her after such conversion and their descendents shall be disqualified from inheriting the property of any of their Hindu relations unless such children or decendents are Hindus at the time when succession opens.

Intentionally or unintentionally the provision can in some cases constitute a powerful financial inducement for the children or descendents to be reconverted to Hinduism. There can be no doubt that the net effect of these provisions is to reinforce religious status quo.

If only one parent is converted, the minor will be left in the custody of the unconverted parent. If both parents have changed their religion, the father's kinsmen (and failing that, the mother's kinsmen) will be given the opportunity of taking the children into their custody.

Harijans are target

The Government policy has tended to perpetuate the solidarity of the Hindu community and prevent defections to Christianity. This has been to some extent possible by the special provision of reservation of seats, quotas of employment, educational and economic aids and assistance to Harijans as guaranteed in the Constitution. All these facilities shall be available to the Harijans of Hindu religion only. If a Harijan who professes a religion different from Hinduism, shall not be deemed to be a Harijan. Consequently the Christian Harijans have been deprived of these concessions. As a result, in a number of cases, the Harijan converts have renounced their Christian faith and returned to Hinduism succumbing to economic inducements in a new form.

Nevertheless, in 1956, a mass conversion took place in India among the Harijans. About 3,00,000 Harijans on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's death embraced Buddhism. Buddhism is an off-shoot of Hinduism but it does not recognize caste. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the then Harijans justifies his action by adding that "The Hindu religion...offered no opportunity for the untouchables to improve their lot, for it is based on inequality....On the other hand Buddhism...is based on equality and justice.

However, the poison of casteism had spread not only among the Hindus but also the Muslims and Christians. It had divided the people and led to quarrels with the result that outsiders had conquered the country and dominated over India for centuries. Casteism was responsible for untouchability and the main obstacle in the way of complete unity of this country.

PART III

HINDU CEREMONY

XXXX

INTRODUCTION

Nothing in the world appears to be of such great antiquity as Hindu caste, Hindu custom, Hindu ceremony and the rituals which are related to them. Hindu culture, Hindu custom and Hindu ceremony are the pillars upon which the entire edifice of Hindu civilization is established.

From time immemorial the Hindus have cultivated the most inviolable attachment to their customs and ceremonies. The Hindus are well bred in the principle of custom and ceremony so much so that any practice outside the realm of custom would be unheard of. Nobody can even dare attempt introducing anything new contrary to the age-old tradition.

The whole Hindu community shall stand ruthlessly against such a dangerous iconoclast as bulwork. All ceremonies are followed strictly with their minutest details and are considered as of the utmost importance for all social beings. All the Hindus are taught their customary ceremonies from their childhood. Today no nation on earth can boast of having kept up so long a time its custom and tradition through ceremony without any significant change. Yet these ceremonies are alive, vibrant and meaningful and have not lost their value and significance amidst the modern, scientific and technological corrosion into the fabric of their life.

The Hindu ceremony is as ancient as the mighty Himalayas; yet it is equally as modern as atomic era. Its spirit of modernity extends from the inner man to his outer science, from his unsuspected self to the produce of his intellect and reason. In this sense, science is not the enemy of Hinduism but a preparation for it.

According to C. Rajagopalachari[1] science "explains all these wonders, that is, puts things in proper order of cause and sequence upto a point. When we proceed to examine the fundamentals of things and go deep down in that examination, we go beyond science into the region of metaphysics. The border line between science and Hinduism is what we call metaphysics."

---

[1] C. Rajagopalachari : Sciense, Philosophy and Religion—an article published in *Religious philosophies of Indian origin* (*Vivekananda Patrika*, August, 1977).

The great advance of science fills up the territory of science with more and more known points, but this does not take us across the border. If we take up any book of physics, we find the preliminary chapters giving some definitions which students commit to memory. The words used are simple; but it is not easy to understand the full meaning of those definitions. This is because these deal with things on the border line. What is "cause" and what is "effect" ? What is a law in science ? These seem to be pretty simple; but really are not easy to grasp as they appear.

Physical phenomena follow a certain sequence. These sequences are set out by men of science as a result of numerous observations; observations being planned for the purpose. Planned observations are called experiments.

Suppose you observe a number of cricket matches. In case you have no book setting out the rules of game, you know nothing about how it all goes on...you see the players coming in and going out when something happens.

You see the figures on the score-board changing from time to time. You see at the end of the game congratulations and excitements. If you observe numerous matches and have observed and noted all the events accurately in the order in which they took place, you could find out the rules of the game even though you did not have anyone to tell you the rules. When you discover rules by such a process you are a scientist.

Nature's game is played in a particular way and according to rules which are not published first. No one knows how it all came out. No institution organized it. Scientists observe hundreds and thousands of events and make out a fairly accurate list of sequences or laws as a result of the analysis of their observations. This is what we call discovery of laws of nature.

Men of science have seen and recorded causes and effects. After laborious observations, experiment and careful analysis, they have put down many rules according to which these events take place. The catalogue of sequence or cause and effect, that is, the series of laws of nature discovered by men of science closely resembles a very intelligent guess of the rules of any game. They are just classified observations, says the Hindu metaphysician. They do not explain.

One of the most strategic contrivances made use of by the early Hindus for preserving their customs has been that of wrapping them up with ceremonies, which provide a strong impression on the senses and communicate something holy to the practice. Consequently ceremonies are rigorously observed.

It is never permitted to anyone to treat them as a mere matter of form which may be conveniently practised or omitted at pleasure. The omission of any, even the least important customary ceremony would not be allowed to escape unpunished from the social point of view. Some of the most important Hindu tenets are not peculiar to them, but are common to all ancient nations of the world.

The rule of marrying within the community is one of this sort of customs. It is Biblically true as well. We find in the Bible that Abraham married his niece; and it is possible that it was a general custom among the Chaldeans. Further, he sent his son Issac to a far off country to bring a kinswoman as his wife. Rebecca could not pardon her son Essau for giving her a stranger as her daughter-in-law, that is to say Canaanites; and she sent her best beloved son, Jacob to marry in their own family, distant as it was. It had passed into a custom therefrom with them, as well as with the Hindus to intermarry within their own caste and community.

A HINDU FAMILY

The purpose of Hindu marriage is continuity of the family. And Hindu family is a social unit. It has assimilated through years and ages, the traditions, sentiments and the modes of behaviour of the community in particular and society at large. Therefore, the Hindu family is a essential medium to preserve these values for its individual members. Thus in the family, the biological, psychological and sociological forces meet in giving the individual his start in life.

Hindu family is a social, economic and religious reality. All activities connected with the Hindu home are intended for the preservation, the continuity of the family, and its customs and ceremonies as they are very real to them.

Life in this world, for the Hindus, is a sojourn. The individual member of family does not belong to the home; nor does the home belong to the individual members. He comes from elsewhere. He belongs elsewhere; he shall have to go from here to eternity and he knows about it. The individual member of the family has to perform his "*dharma*" and "*karma*"[1] here without manifesting any sign of ownership of any material possession.

The entire landed property belongs, in the social meaning, to their forefathers and their progeny not; to the individual member himself. The home belongs to the perpetual God *Agni* (sacred God of Fire) to whom the householder offers oblations three times a day. It is the symbol of the continuity of family.

Within the four walls of his home there is always the presence of divine witness in the form of God Fire to each and every one for his deeds. The Sacred Fire is the permanent deity of the family. It is their belief that the sacred Fire keeps constant watch over, blesses, directs and inspires all the members of the Hindu home. The sacred Fire is the silent witness. He is also the intercessor between man and God. He is the God's representative to interpret the divinity to men and the humanity to God. It is in view of these ideas and ideals that a Hindu householder is asked to live a life of non-attachment in the family; in a spirit of selflessness while conducting the affairs of the world.

---

[1] "*Dharma*" means religious rites and duties of a householder. "*Karma*" means service to the family and dedication to the community.

HINDU FAMILY—A JOINT FAMILY

Hindu family is of a joint nature. It is normally an undivided joint family. A joint family is the basic unit of Hindu social structure. It is the traditional family pattern. Even where the forces of modernity are bringing about great changes in the concept and form of family structure, this traditional Hindu joint family—ideal has its gravitational pull.

A joint family means that all the members of the family live together in the same house. The family does not consist of parents and children only. Presumably there is no limit to its size. The joint family includes at least three generations; the life span of three generations is around a hundred year. Thus a joint family is composed of three or more generations living together in the same house, cooking in the same kitchen, owning property in common or pooling, the resources of income for common family, common funding and common spending.

It may be a small joint family which is in modern times composed of a household in which parents live with their married sons and other unmarried children or two brothers live together with their wives and children. The small joint family is now the most typical form of family amongst the middle and upper class Hindus in India. Still in the rural areas the joint families are large :

"Not only parents and children, brothers and step brothers live on the common property, but it may sometime include ascendents and descendents and the collaterals upto many generations."[1]

Therefore the Hindu family is an association where the members share a common kitchen and common bath rooms. Every member of the family undergoes the same "*Samskaras*" (rituals and ceremonies), the sacraments prescribed by the Holy Scriptures for satisfying the body ; the sacrificial rites at these rituals ("*Samskaras*") are to be performed at the common sacred fire (household deity).

There are about fifty "*Samskaras*" (rituals) supposed to purify the person of a human being in this life and for the life after death. Thus all the members of a joint family co-operate and work for each other. The earnings, savings and duties are shared by all the family members without any distinction of sex. Both male and female enjoy equal rights and privileges in their own sphere.

The mother, the father, as well as the eldest brothers must be respected and obeyed by everyone in the family. Punishment has been one of the chief means with most parents for controlling, guiding and disciplining the behaviour of their children.

The mother who gives birth to a son rears him up, nurses and looks after him is adorable and very dear in a Hindu home. The birth of a son is considered to be particularly contributory towards helplng the father to execute his obligations which are due to the departed ancestors ("*Ptri-rina*")– one of the three basic social obligations ("*rinas*"), each of which every Hindu is duty-bound to fulfil.

---

[1] J. Jolly : *Hindu Law and Customs*: tr. by B.K. Ghosh, Greater India Society, Calcutta (1928).

Pitri-Paksha

(Seven worlds of fore-fathers)

The Vedic Aryans did not have a well defined hell. Their God of Death (*Yama*)* was a "controller and dispenser of justice". In the Upanishads, he is a teacher. It is probably during the Puranic Age with its luxuriance of myths, these series of hells and heavens are visualized.

The Vedic Hindus believe in a "*Pitrilok*" (where the souls of the departed fore-fathers reside). There are two paths (ways) for the dead-*devayana* and *Pitryana* these later became *Uttarayana*)—tropic of Cancer and *Dakshinayana* (Tropic of Capricorn). The former also is called the Northern path of the earth round the Sun (*Uttarayana*). This is the path of light and is taken or followed by the "realized souls", it leads them to *Brahmalok* (heaven). The second, the Southern path of the earth round the Sun (*Dakshinayana*) is the way of darkness and it is taken by the non-virtuous who, however, do not possesss knowledge of the highest. Pitryana leads to the world of ancestors *i.e.* Pitriloka.

The *Matsyapurana* mentions seven *pitrilokas*, strangely enough, thus correspond with seven houses of western spiritualism. Three of the seven classes of *Pitras* occupying them are incoporeal—*Vairajas*, *Agnishraltos* and *Barhishada*; the four classes of corporeal *pitras* are *sukalas*, *angiravas*, *susvadhas* and *samapas*.

The *pitras* are important in popular Hinduism.

XXXXI

PURIFICATORY RITES OF THE HINDUS

According to Wilson, "The mountain rolled about on Lord Vishnu (who had taken the form of a turtle) is back. As a result it rubbed off hair from Lord Vishnu's back. It is believed that these hairs were cast ashore and taken roots as "*durba*" grass."

Before the performance of any ceremony, the place where it is to take place must be sanctified. This is usually the duty of the Hindu women; and the principal ingredients required for sanctification are cow-dung and "*Durba*" grass (blades of green grass). They dilute the fresh cow-dung with water and make a sort of a paste, which they spread over the floor with new brooms, making zig-zags, and other pattern as they go on. They then draw wide lines of alternate red and white over this and sprinkle the whole with "*durba*-grass" after which the place is sanctified.

This is the way in which the Hindus purify their homes day by day from defilements. In the villages most of the houses are made out of mud and bamboo. It is customary amongst the upper class Hindus to have their buildings scrubbed at least once a day.

**Yama* is also called *Kala* (time) and Shiva is "*Kala-Kal*"—the destroyer of time. Hindu salvation means Shiva frees man from a time and space bound existence.

What is a durbha Grass ?

This plant belongs to the genus *borage*. It is found everywhere, especially in damp marshy ground and low-lying areas. Brahmins always keep some in their house and it is used in all their ceremonies. It grows to the height of above two feet and is thinly pointed at the top. It is extremely rough to touch, and if rubbed the wrong way, it cuts through the skin and draws blood.

Hindu legends differ as to the origin of the sacred grass. Some say that it was produced at the time When Gods and demons were all busy churning, with the mountain, Mandra the sea of milk in order to extract from it, "*Amrita*" or nectar which would render them immortal.

Others say that Gods, while greedily drinking the "*Amrita* " which they had with infinite pain extracted from the sea of milk, let fall a few drops of the nectar on this grass, which thus became sacred.

Then again, others assert that it was produced at that time when "Mohini" that is to say, Vishnu metamorphosed into a courtesan of that name—was distributing "*Amrita*" to Gods. The vessel containing the nectar was supported on Mohini's hip, from which some flashy filaments fell and took root in the ground, and developed under the form of *durbha* grass.

Be this as it may, *durbha* grass is looked upon as part of Vishnu Himself. On the strength of this, the Brahmins worship it and offer sacrifices to it, and as may be remembered, make use of it in all other ceremonies, in the belief that it possesses the virtue of purifying everything.

An annual feast instituted in honour of the sacred "*durbha*" grass is celebrated as on the eighth day of the moon in the month of *Bhadra* (August-September), and is called the "*Durbha Ashtami*". By offering grass as a sacrifice on that day immortality and blessedness for ten ancestors may be secured; and another result is that one's posterity increases and multiplies like the "*durbha*" grass itself, which is one of the most prolific members of the vegetation kingdom. Some Hindus also believe that "*durbha*" grass is endowed with peculiar properties, either medicinal or culinary or other, which would account for its high position in the midst of all Hindu ceremonies.

The Tulsi (*Ocymum Sanctum*)—A plant for the Hindu Ceremony

The Tulsi plant is found in every Hindu home. It is a species resembling the basil that grows in Europe. Hindu Brahmins consider it to be the wife of Lord Vishnu, and revere it accordingly. "Nothing on earth can equal the virtues of *Tulsi*"; they say, "*Tulsi tulana nasty ata eva tulsi*". *Puja* must be offered daily to it by the Hindus. When a Brahmin is dying one of the *Tulsi* plants is fetched and placed on a pedestal. Before the funeral ceremony is completed, a bit of its root is placed on his face, eyes, ears and chest; he is then sprinkled from head to foot with *Tulsi* twig which has been dipped into water for purification of the dead-body. Water dipped leaves are equivalent to the sacred and holy water of the Ganges. While the funeral ceremony is being performed, his friends and relations cry several times aloud, "*Tulsi! Tulsi !! Tulsi!!!*

The man can then die in the happy certainty that he will go straight to heaven for a peaceful abode for the rest of his life. For freedom of sin, it is sufficient to look at the sacred plant of *Tulsi*. By touching it a man is purified from all defilements, and if he performs the "*Namaskaram*" (prostrating oneself before the plant) to it and taking the juice of Tulsi leaves may definitely cure any chronic disease. The juice of this plant has magical charm to cure any disease. Salvation is assured to anyone who waters and attends to it every day. If a branch of it is given to Lord Vishnu in the month of *Kartika* (November), it will be more pleasing to God than a thousand cows offered to Lord Vishnu at any time. Whatsoever, a spray of *Tulsi* that has been dipped in saffron, is assured of becoming like Vishnu Himself; and of enjoying a share in Vishnus happiness. To give a twig of Tulsi to anyone who is in any danger, or who is suffering from anxieties and cares, is a certain means of securing for him a satisfactory ending to his difficulties.

Most Brahmins cultivate the plant in the house and offer it a daily prayers and sacrifices in the evening. They kindle a candle at its foot. They also take care that it shall grow near the place where they perform their ablutions and in their meeting places. The *Tulsi* is usually planted on a little mound of sand, which they call "*Vrindavana*" (abode of Lord Krishna) or on square pillar, three or four feet in height, hollow at the top, with its four sides facing the four points of the campass. Brahmins consider it a meritorious act to carefully water and nurture the plant.

Its leaves have a sweet aromatic scent and act as a cough elixir and cordial; indeed the Hindus think that they possess many medicinal properties. Brahmins always swallow one or two leaves after their meals as an acid to digestion. They also eat some both before and after performing their ablution in cold water in order to keep up the proper body temperature, and to prevent from cold and chill and other maladies which might attack them without this preventive. It is probably in consequence of its medicinal properties that the Hindus have deitified the plant.

XXXXII

ALMANAC-THE HINDU CALENDAR FOR ALL CEREMONIES

The Hindu Calendar is an astronomical Almanac which means the five members, because it contains the following information :

1. the position of the moon,
2. the constellation near which the moon is located on each particular day,
3. the day of the week,
4. the eclipse, and
5. the position of various planets.

Lucky and unlucky days are also indicated ; those, for instance, on which a person may celebrate a particular ceremony or may travel towards one of the four cardinal directions. There are numerous other predictions of similar nature in the

Almanac, which it would be tedious to give in detail. Almanac details out the date appropriate for wedding, journey to foreign land, opening of an establishment or registration of a corporation, etc.

The Hindu Brahmin is one who by studying the Almanac is able to state propitious or unpropitious time and location of marriage or *Upanayan*, first day in school for a new student, etc.

The Almanac can foretell too whether season will be wet or dry and whether the locusts or other insects will or will not attack and devour crops, whether it will be a healthy or unhealthy year; whether there will be peace or war, whether there will be death or down fall of a political leader; from what quarters the country will be attacked ; who will be victorious, etc. In the past all that was written in the Almanac for the day would be narrated to the king by the Hindu priest. This even covers as to whether the prince should hunt, walk or receive foreign visitors from the neighbouring countriés. The purohit discovers in his infallible book when there is an unpropitious moment for the chase, the walk or the foreign Travel.

Purohit-A Hindu Pastor

The services of the Hindu Brahmin priest (*purohit*) are indispensable for various occasions: to christen the newly born child and to draw their horoscopes; to bless new homes, wells and tanks; to purify dwellings and temples which have become polluted ; and also to consecrate the latter; to animate idols and instal in them their particular deities by the power of their chanting from the scriptures; and to conduct Hindu marriage and Hindu funerals.

The most important of his duties, however, is performance or celebration of weddings and that of funeral rites. The ceremonies on these occasions are so numerous and complicated that an ordinary Brahmin would never be able to get through them all; they can only be learned by a special study and training.

Besides, there are the "*Mantras*" connected with them which are known only to the *purohitas*. These are incorporated in the books of rituals, which they take great care to hide from the eyes of all persons outside their own sect. The father makes his son learn these *mantras* by heart. Thus they descend from one generation to another in the same family.

It must be admitted that these learned Hindu Brahmins, unacquainted as they are with the analytical operations which in Europe or America facilitate the computation of the movements of the star, and having only the most ancient tables wherewith to assist their calculations, require an enormous amount of patience and concentrated attention to produce results which are trustworthy.

This Almanac is an absolute necessity to every purohit since it tells him about the lucky or unlucky days and fortunate or unfortunate constellations; and also which are propitious hours on each day. The Brahmins draw inspiration from the book in predicting happy and unhappy events in one's life. A large number of people, rich and poor, come to consult them.

A purohit is found in all villages, towns and cities where Brahmins live. He enjoys a free grant of land in the villages. A purohit is a Brahmin whose business is to fix days for marriages and other ceremonies of all castes.

A *purohita* is like a pastor of a Christian church without denominational distinction. He is not on the pay roll of a Hindu temple unlike a Christian pastor. He lives on gifts and doles from his constituents. He lives a life of austerity while a Christian foreign pastor lives in luxury and comforts. The main job of a Brahmin purohit is to perform all religious ceremonies of the Hindus. The Hindus celebrate thirteen festivals in twelve months in addition to family ceremonies. Without a *purohit* no Hindu ceremony is solemnized. He may live and serve the community without having any affiliation to the temple. He may be just an individual. Once he is recognized by the community he is respected.

XXXXIII

HINDU CEREMONIES

The purificatory ceremonies of a Hindu begin before his birth. Of the sixteen principal ceremonies prescribed by the Hindu Law-giver—Manu, for each person, only important ones are narrated in the following section :

1. The Foetus laying Ceremony

The foetus laying ceremony is performed at the consumation of marriage. This ceremony is in confirmation of the commitment made by the marrying couples at their wedding that they will fulfill the obligation of retaining the continuity of the family line. Also, the mating of husband and wife as identified with the foetus laying ceremony suggests that mating is conceived as one of the most important responsibilities of the married couple towards the family and the community.

The mother is the first and the most important person to exercise an influence on the child. It is recognized that during pregnancy, the growth and development of the child is greatly inspired by the mental, emotional and moral quality of the mother. If she thinks of holy and serene objects, enjoys peace and happiness and finds her atmosphere congenial, she can stimulate the child's mental faculties; she can induce the great patriotic and other virtuous qualities and instil spiritual force and dynamism into its mind.

When she is pregnant, the prayer is to secure her health and that of the foetus so that both might remain alive and healthy after parturition. The expectant mother has her surroundings and environs solemn, silent and noble, which lay the foundations of the growth and development of healthy child both in mind and body.

2. Male Making Ceremony (*Purusana*)

The "Male-making" ceremony is performed during the third month of the wife's pregnancy. It is indeed to propitiate the duties which are supposed to govern the sex of the foetus so that a male issue may be born.

The male issue is an important adjunct in the Hindu family; for he helps the continuity of the family. In view of this importance, male-making ceremony is considered to be an ideal way of serving the welfare of the family and through it, the welfare of the community. The Hindu society is a male-dominated society.

3. The First Ceremony of the Infant (*Jata-Karma*)

This ceremony is celebrated by honey being stirred up in clarified butter (ghee) and put into the mouth of the infant by means of a gold ring on the sixth day of its birth.

In West Bengal, women folks would pour down and shower grains of paddy and tufts of green grass (*durbha*) on the head of the newly born baby, praying for its long life. The horoscope of the child is invariably got prepared on this day. A child is garlanded, if not with a gold necklace. studded with diamonds and pearls, at least with a garland of fresh flowers. A cradle is brought for the new born babe. A cord of mango leaves is usually hung over the main door of the house as a mark of rejoicing. And the mother is honoured on this day, if she has given birth to a male-child.

This ceremony is performed by the father who touches and smells the child and utters benedictory *mantras* (couplets from the Hindu Scriptures) into the ears of the child. In this chanting the father wishes that the child may be endowed with long life (*ayu*) and intelligence (*medha*). After the child is fed with honey and butter, the child is fed on the mother's breasts for the first time. The Hindus believe that breast-feeding baby enjoys better and healthy life. This day is specially important to all Hindus who are of the opinion that whatever is written on the forehead of the child on this day as indicated in the horoscope can never be changed. The fate of the child is sealed for ever.

4. Woman's Confinement

On the eleventh day of delivery of the child all the linen and clothes that have been used during the period of confinement (in case the delivery takes place at home and not in the hospital or nursing home) are given to washerwoman and house is purified according to the Hindu custom. Then they call a Brahmin priest (*purohit*) to the house. The woman who has just been confined shall hold the child in her arms and move along with her husband to take her seat on an elevated platform, erected for this purpose. This platform is set up in the centre of the living room and it is covered with a piece of new cloth. The Brahmin priest (*purohit*) then approaches them and performs worship service for the welfare of the father, mother and the newly born child.

The Brahmin priest pours a small quantity of the consecrated sacred Ganges water into the hands of the father and mother of the child. They drink a portion and pour the rest over their heads as a kind of blessing to them. The priest also sprinkles this sacred Ganges water over the whole house and all who are living in the house. The priest is then presented with some gifts and offerings for commissioning prayers for the baby and the whole family. When the priest leaves the house, all relations and friends who have been invited to this ceremony gather together to rejoice. This ceremony is called "cleanliness from defilement" of confinement But the woman who has been confined does not become perfectly pure before the end of 30 days. She must live apart from her husband and the rest of the members of the family.

This ceremony closely resembles that which Jewish women are obliged to follow under similar circumstances (Leviticus XI), but the Hindus pay no attention as do the Israelites, to the difference in the sex of the child. As regards the time during which the uncleanliness of the mother lasts it is just the same with the Hindus whether a boy or a girl is born.

5. **Name Ceremony** (*Nama-Karan*)

On the twelfth day after the birth of the child, the parents give it a name. This is the "*Namakaran*" ceremony. There is a practice of putting a mark (*tilak*) on the forehead of the child after mixing yogurt (*dahi*), milk and turmeric (*haldi*). The custom is to ascertain on the occasion the natural bent of the child. Before the child are placed several articles such as paddy, fried rice, clod of earth, gold, silver, books, etc. just to induce the child to choose any one of these articles. The selection of any one of these articles by the child determines the area of its interest in life, as well as its future avocation.

The question of naming is important according to some authorities, and certain broad rules have to be followed here in order that the name may referred to the family, the place of birth, the community in which its birth takes place and class or caste to which the parents belong. In many instances you may come across a Hindu name that indicates the name of the father, the name of the mother, the place of its birth. Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan was a renowned Indian philospher and the President of the Union of India. His native village was Sarvapalli, his mother's name was Radha and father's name Krishnan.

In Manu's opinion, for an example, the name given to the new born child should be such as to signify his *varna* (caste), Thus the name of a Brahmin should denote something auspicious (*mangalam*) and imply contentment.

So again, the name of Kshatriya should denote power (*bala*) and imply his duty of protection (*raksha*) as "*Balavana*" (the mighty man). That of a Vaishya should denote wealth (*dhana*) and express prosperity as vasubhuti. Lastly, a Sudra name should denote something simple and humble and his duty of service as "*Dina*" (humble, "*Das*", servant). The names of women should be easy to pronounce; they should not imply anything dreadful. On the other hand pleasing and charming should be their names.

The house having been purified after the confinement of the mother, the father of the child invites his relations and friends and neighbours to be present at this ceremony and at the feast that follows.

The guests go all together to perform their ablution and on their return they first of all offer the sacrifice to the Household Fire-God, in honour of the constellation of nine stars. Then the father of the child, holding the baby in his arms, seats himself on the raised platform and performs the "*sam-kalpa*".

By his side is a copper plate full of rice. He holds a gold ring in his right hand and writes on the rice the day of the moon, the name of the day, that of the constellation under which the child was born and finally the name that he wishes to give him. He then calls the child three times by his name in a loud voice.

When the ceremony ends, he gives a gift to the Brahmin priest who comes to conduct the ceremony. He distributes sweets and betel to all the Brahmins present and then all take their place at the feast. As soon as it is over, the master of the house again offers betel to his guests and also gifts if he can afford to do so. The mother of the child does not appear at the ceremony for the reason that she is not perfectly pure until 30 days of her confinement is over.

6. The Nishkarman Ceremony

This ceremony is performed in the fourth month after the child is born. Here the child is, as if, presented to the Sun-God and this is its first contact with the greatest natural force that weilds power over the world. In fact, its first contact with the world outside the home is virtually celebrated.

7. Solid Foods-Eating Ceremony (*Anna-prasana*)

As soon as the child is six months old, he is weaned. Then the "*Annaprasana*" takes place. The name of the ceremony expresses the idea of feeding the child on solid foods for the first time.

For this occasion they choose a month, a week, a day and a star which all combine to give a favourable augury. A pandal is erected outside the courtyard. It is ornamented and decorated all round with mango leaves, coloured papers, balloons and flowers. Music is played. Relations, friends and neighbours are invited to this festive occasion to rejoice with the parents of the child. All guests come after having a bath and purified themselves. This time mother, holding the child in her arms, and accompanied by her husband seats herself beside him on a platform which has been set up in the centre of the courtyard of the house. The Brahmin priest advances towards them, performs the "*sam-kalpa*", worshipping the sacred household Fire-God to which he presents clarified butter, incense. When he has finished, the woman folk sing verses expressing their good wishes for the future happiness and prosperity of the child and perform candle-light dance (*arati*) around the child who is dressed for the occasion.

The father offers (*puja*) worship to his household Fire-God and a portion of the dishes prepared for the general feast is set apart as offerings (*neiveddya*) to the household Fire-God.

Then the married women form a procession and sing as they move in harmony. They bring in a new silver plated copper dish which is given by the maternal uncle of the child. These woman folk touch the child and put on new clothes very gently. They pour some "paramanna" (a mixture composed of rice, sugar, milk, honey boiled together) from the pudding bowl. Recommencing their song, they proceed in the same solemn order towards the household Fire-God and place the pudding bowl again before the altar. They make a profound obeisance to the new deity. Then they invoke the deities to bless the child to grow to give him strength, health, long life and plenty of this world's good things. Then taking up again the pudding bowl from the altar of the household deity, they carry it back, still singing, to the child.

Two of these women then open the mouth of the child; while the third woman pours gently some of the mixture contained in the plate down its throat. During this time music is played and the women sing during the ceremony. The whole ceremony comes to an end by the last candle-light dancing by women. All the Brahmins present, bless the child with a pinch of coloured rice. Finally, all guests sit down to a feast. The ceremony ends with by the distribntion of betel and gifts to the guests.

8. **First Hair Cutting Ceremony** (*Churakama*)

The first tonsure of the hair of the child is performed for the sake of "*dharma*". three years after the birth of the child. This ceremony may take place in the first year or third year or at any age according to the tradition of each family or caste.

This ceremony is perhaps intended to celebrate the child's introduction to the rule of physical hygiene. The ears of the child are also bored usually on this day if the child is a girl. This is known as "*Kanaveda*" (perforation of the ears) ceremony of Lord Krishna which was done when he was 7 year old. In the villages both the boys and girls have their ears bored in their tender age.

The Brahmins are invited to assemble under the pandal after having performed their ablutions before the household deity—the sacred Fire-God. The child is brought in by the father and mother who sit the child between them on a little platform.

The married women begin annointing the child from head to foot with oil. After oil massage they give the child a ceremonious bath with warm water in case the weather is cold. After bath, sandal wood paste is applied to the forehead of the child. The child puts on gold ornaments and a necklace of coral beads around the neck. In two hands gold bracelets are put on to match the small wrist of the child.

The priest then draws near the child and performs "*puja*" to bless the child. The priest also offers sacrifice to the household deity and the constellation of nine stars. He next traces on the floor in front of the child a square patch with red earth, which they cover with rice (that has the husk on). The child is made to sit near a square patch and the family barber after offering worship to his razor* proceeds to shave the child's head, leaving one lock at the top, which is never cut. While the barber is performing his part of the ceremony, women folk sing to the tune of musical instruments. All the Brahmins present remain standing in perfect silence.

As soon as the barber has finished, they give him the money due to him for the act of shaving. He picks up the coin and also some gifts before retiring for the day. He carries also paddy that was scattered over the square patch.

The child is immediately put into a second shower to purify him from the defilement caused by the touch of the family barber who belongs to an untouchable caste. Then the child is dressed again beautifully for the day. The women perform the candle-light dance and the priest for the second time performs the "*havan*" to the constellation of nine stars. It is generally believed that all Hindus originally came from the constellation of nine planets. The entertainment and feast gradually end with the distribution of gifts and betel to the Brahmins and the guests.

The ears of the children of both sexs are pierced at this time of initiation. This is an occasion for another feast. The goldsmith performs operation with a very fine gold wire, and the size of the hole is generally increased from time to time. The hole of the girls' ears is generally made larger so that they may wear beautiful ear-rings. In some States of India men and women have the holes as large as a Spanish piastre.

However, odd these customs may appear to the Westerners, at any rate they have the advantage of bringing the Brahmins together and obliging them to fulfill the mutual commitments. And they certainly help form a class of men who are distirctively superior to other Hindus in their conduct, manners and quality of life.

9. School Going Ceremony

On an auspicious day so fixed after consultation with the Brahmin astrologer, the child's parents would invite the school teacher and all his students to their home. After some rituals followed, the teacher writes down some letters of alphabets on a slate with a piece of chalk. The child moves his fingers with the movement of the writing of his/her teacher.

The house shall be sprinkled with the sacred Ganges water and the mother of the child will burn some incense for purification of the place. After the boy has repeated these alphabets on the writings of the teacher, the teacher would make obeisance before the family deity. Sweet-meats are distributed among those assembled on the occasion. The teacher and his/her pupils are served with fruits and sweets and some gifts are also offered to the teacher. This is how a Hindu child is introduced to his/her teacher outside the school environment.

---

*This act of worship, which the barber always performs before shaving anyone consists in putting the razor to his forehead.

10. **Hindu Baptism** (*Upanayana Ceremony*)

Upanayana ceremony, when the boy is initiated into the study of the Vedas, is performed at different ages for different castes (*varna*). With this ceremony the boy is readily accepted as a member of the group pursuings the spiritual life in the Hindu community to which his forefathers belonged. From then onwards he would have a right to know and learn the well-preserved sacred lore of Hindu community.

It is like Christian baptism. He now enters the first stage of love of "*dharma*". In fact, the ceremony of "*Upanayana*" heralds the second birth of the individual—the spiritual birth. It is, therefore, significant of the appellation-*dvi-ja*, twice-born given to the members of the first three castes (*varnas*), in that any one born within any of the these *varnas*, must, of necessity, go through the *Upanayan* ceremony.

After *Upanayana*, the student begins his studies of the Vedas including the Vedanta for a certain period which is different for different *varnas*, usually at the hermitage of *guru* (teacher).

According to Manu, the Hindu Law-giver, *Upanayana* is to be performed sometime before the completion of the 16th year for a Brahmin, of 22 years in the case of a Kshatriya and of 24 years in the case of a Vaishya. This ceremony forms a part of the duties of a Hindu bachelor (*Brahmacharya*).

Upanayana is also known as "sacred thread" ceremony and it is the exclusive privilege of the first three high castes. A cord of "*munja grass*" is made for a Brahmin, a bow of string for a Kshatriya and a bow of wool for a Vaishya, usually 2¼ yards long, made in three strings to be tied across the shoulder of the boy after reciting certain prayers over it.

The sacred thread consisting of three threads each composed of three finer threads interwined into one, is then hung on the left shoulder of the boy, the ends tied round the right arm. The length of this thread can be of 26 times of the circumferences of the fist. Its length is usually ninetysix times the breadth of the four fingers of a man which is equal to his height. The three threads represent the "Trinity" of the Hindu Gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar—and the white colour of the sacred thread signifies purity and holiness of its character for those who are having this.

One may agree that the pomp and fanfare, the social obligations, the invitations to lunch and the giving of gifts are needless acts but the actual religious ritual of the thread ceremony must remain. The *Upanayana* means the sacred or the third-eye-opening. It helps equip an individual to face the world. For the boy whose thread ceremony is completed is formally initiated into the disciplinary life and as such a teenager, he gets fortified with the wisdom of the Vedas and the "Sanskrit *shlokas*."

It all depends on how the ceremony is performed. Religion has been the backbone of the Hindus and the essence of the Hindu religion is perpetuated by significant rituals. On the pretext of being fashionable one cannot eschew what has been handed down to the Hindus from generation to generation. *Vidya* (knowledge) takes on a newer meaning after the thread ceremony. A boy is considered physically and mentally prepared to face the stresses and strains of living in this world of complexities through this initiation.

The first stage of Hindu life-*Brahmacharya* of the period of education begins with *Upanayana* (baptism); the sacred thread ceremony is for the "twice-born" only.

The term *Upanayana* literally signifies "opening of third eye at teacher's home". The age of the *Upanayana* according to the Hindu Scriptures (Yajnavalkya) :

"In the eighth of conceptions or in the eighth year of birth, the *Upanayana* ceremony of the Brahmins, of the Kshatriyas in the eleventh, of the Vaishyas in the eleventh plus one". Some say according to family customs, *Upanayana* is celebrated upto sixteen, twenty-second; and twentyfourth as maximum period for *Upanayana* for the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas respectively. Above that age, they all become outcaste in case no *Upanayana* ceremony is performed. They have fallen from *Savitri* (grace) so long as they do not perform the sacrifice called "*vratyastoma*" (re-initiation).

Upanayana ceremony marks the entrance of the pupil into the house of his preceptor for learning; several magical properties are attached to it. If Brahmanic glory is desired by the boy, *Upanayana* should be given during the seventh year; if longevity is desired, the *Upanayana* is to be given during the eighth; during the ninth year *Upanayana* is given, if brilliance is desired; during the tenth year, if possession of much food is desired; during the eleventh year, if efficiency of the sense organs is desired; during the twelfth year if possession of cattle is desired; the *Upanayana* is given in the thirteenth year, if intelligence is desired; during the fourteenth year if stoutness is desired; and during the sixteenth, if all desirable things are desired."

Manu on the other hand states : "*Upanayana* of a Brahmin who desires proficiency in the sacred learning should take place in the fifth year (after conception) that of a Kshatriya who wishes to become powerful in the sixth (and that) of a Vaishya who longs for success in his business in the eighth."

Various superstitions that have clustered round the *Upanayana* ceremony have gradually vanished away, if not the rituals but the importance of it. *Upanayana* is the beginning of a new life—the life of the pupil; this ritual is performed when a student commences his vedic studies or education under the supervision of a *guru*, with whom he normally resides.

It is not an obligatory ritual. If a student is unfit by character or calibre to receive the Vedic education, he is also not admitted to its privilege and opportunity. If on the other hand, during the course of his education, he has to go to a different teacher, the ritual has to be repeated. It is also felt that it should again be performed in the case of married men if they want to prosecute further studies under a new teacher. It is essentially an educational ritual and has resemblances to the formalities of admission procedures of modern school or college or university for higher education.

The following rules as guidance for the students at the teacher's home are practised :

(a) He should study when invited to do so by the preceptor. Whatever he brings with him from his home, he should present to his teacher. He should always promote his interest by all acts of mind, speech and body.
(b) The bachelor students should live with the teacher; in the absence of the latter, with his son, or wife.
(c) The student has to take the teacher's home as his own and to look after the interest of the teacher and his family.
(d) The education that the bachelor student receives at the feet of his master (*guru*) is free.
(e) This education is a combination of arts, philosophy, astrology, astronomy and *yoga* practices, law and medicine.
(f) This is the time Brahmin students are given special training for priesthood.

On the religious duties of the Brahmin students the following rituals are observed :

Daily Pranayan (Discipline and yoga practices).

After bath and purification, the Brahmin student must offer libations of waters to the Gods, sages, etc. every-day and worship the image of Gods and place fuel on the sacred Fire.

Purified by sipping water, he should daily worship during both twilight and morning with concentration and devotion in a pure place, chanting the prescribed texts according to the Hindu tradition.

After having morning bath with vedic words (*Gayatri* chanting) the Brahmin student has to offer "*argha*" (worship) to the Sun and then repeat the *Gayatri mantra* and to do others auxillary performances by the process of *yoga* practices.

The Act of Pranayan

First, it a is breathing slowly through one nostril, secondly by retaining the breath by closing both the nostril; and thirdly, breathing out slowly by the other nostril.

In performing *yoga pranayan* the left nostril should be closed by pressing it with the ring finger and the little finger of the right hand, and exhale air down through the right nostril. Then the right nostril should also be closed by the thumb and the air retained. Then the right and little fingers should be raised and the air expelled from the left nostril.

A Brahmin student has to perform worship in the morning, sitting eastward till the sun is risen on the horizon, and also in the evening, sitting westward till the stars rise in the sky. After this performance of twilight—prayers outside on the banks of a river, he has to worship before the sacred Fire-God at home. All the prayers are offered in a sitting posture. Having performed the ceremony of the day, he obtains the permission of the master to touch food. He has to eat two major meals with a speed duly controlled. He has to thank God for the food served to him because this food has been begged by other students or the whole student community.

The students in master's house has to renounce non-vegetarian food, woman, pleasure or liquor, vulgar speech, dancing, smoking, anger, covetousness and all sexual desires. The student wears simple white dress.

This new white dress symbolizes the outer covering of the embryo. This initiation is known as the second birth for the spiritual development. This is an act of consercration (*diksha*). It is a life of plain living and high thinking. The student has to develop "frustration tolerance". In all humility and with a reverntial attitude, the initiated student is trained in the habits of simple life, irrespective of the family he belongs to.

J.M. William in his book, "*Principles of Social Psychology*" (Knopfs, New York, 1920) has rightly observed that young children should be taught to think not of what they can have but of what they can do without. Then, as men and women, they will be free to give themselves to high aims untempted by the material side of life.

The ceremony winds up with a caution to the initiated to speak the truth always, for *diksha* is the truth and reality, therefore, must the student be circumspect and guarded in his utterances since all the Gods from Agni to Vishnu are invoked and are present in their midst.

All these elaborate rituals have a great social and spiritual significance which is worth noting in this connection. They create an atmosphere of dignity and seriousness about this particular stage of life; they really impress upon the minds of the students concerned with deeper understanding of greater responsibility.

11. The Samavartana Ceremony (*Return of Student*)

It is celebrated on the return of the student to his ancestoral home immediately after the completion of studies at the hermitage of his *guru*. This "*Samskara*" (ceremony) is the turning point in the life of the individual student. This marks the completion of education and justifies his fitness to enter into a world of reality and to accept the challenge and responsibility of family life as a householder.

12. Marriage (*Vivah*) Ceremony

Vivaha (marriage) is the most important of all the Hindu ceremonies (*Samskaras*). The *vivah* ceremony marks the individual entry into the life of the householder (*Grihastha*). For several reasons, marriage is held in high esteem by the Hindus, for here, he takes the pledge to assist in the continuation of the family, race and community and actually commences his efforts in that direction.

Here again, he accepts the fundamental doctrine of "*Yajna*" (sacrifice) in its fullest sense; he takes a vow also to keep on the Home sacred Fire (Agni-God) continually alive.

Marriage is the rule and the few who turn their faces from it for noble or pious motivations are also respected highly among the Hindus as they lead the most disciplined life of high morality and character. When so many are aflame with lust, what reproach is their in continence...neither enjoin marriage nor forbid it. Let each choose for himself the poison or the nectar. If there is no marriage the fountain-head of humanity shall become choked and stream of divine benevolence shall sink into the sand. It is so said.

In the *Old Testament* it is recorded :

"The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden as its gardener, to tend and care for it . . . . And the Lord God said, "It isn't good for man to be alone; I will make a companion for him; a helper suited to his needs . . . . Then the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and took one of his ribs and closed up the place from which he had removed it, and made the rib into a woman, and brought her to the man. This is it."

Adam exclaimed : "She is part of my own bone and flesh !

Her name is woman, because she was taken out of a man."[1]

This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife in such a way that the two become one person. And God blessed them and told them "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; you are masters of the universe."

The purpose of Hindu marriage according to the Hindu Scriptures (*Rigveda*) is to enable a man, by becoming a householder to perform religious sacrifices to the family deity and to procreate sons. Marriage to a Hindu is a sacrament and not a contract,

"Let the mutual fidelity continue unto death." This may be considered as the substance of the Hindu concept of husband and wife in their respective relationships.

"Let man and woman, united in wedlock, constantly exert themselves that they may not be disunited and may not violate their mutual fidelity."

Married life is not a life of pick and choose or of getting what one can but a life in which one must receive well what is offered. Marriage is irrecovable. God has joined them together to be husband and wife. This is His eternal plan on earth. Both should discipline themselves in order to make the necessory sacrifices to accommodate each other. Married life is taken for granted by both. There is no question of giving it up if they cannot get along together for a while. Differences of opinion and conflicts of interest outwardly may be there. Their solution is seen not in separation but in submission of one to another. God's plan, is to be placed above man's rationality and in fulfiling the divine plan, husband and wife have a certain amount of contentment and satisfaction.

---

[1] *The Living Bible* : Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton (USA), Genesis 2 : 15, 18, 21-24.

However, the emphasis on personal salvation through a son as dominannt. The desire to have an heir to the property as well as personal "*moksha*" induces the Hindus to marry more than one wives for the sake of male children under special circumstances. The main reason for marriage is necessity of a son to perform oblation ceremonies to ancestors. Thus the Hindu society permits a second wife if the first wife is barren or fails to give birth to a son.

Unmarried Women

Unmarried women mean the women who had no sex relationship with anyone before and for the married women none but the husband she had been legally wedded to. The Hindus have emphasized on pre-nuptial chastity on the part of the male and female alike. It is not one sided valuation of chastitiy, morality and character. Among the Hindus, marriage is considered obligatory for every man or women.

"To be mother were women created, and to be father, men; therefore the *Vedas* ordain that "*dharma*" must be practised by man together with his legally wedded wife."

Hindu marriage is a sacrament—sanctifying the body, which every man and woman must pass at the proper age and time. Manu considers marriage as a social institution for the regulation of proper relations between the sexes. For an unmarried woman it is impossible to gain the "Ultimate Bliss" as she has not sanctified her body by marriage. This has been claimed by the Hindu saint, Narada. There is a story in the *Mahabharata* that a lady who remained single because she could not find her equal to marry; she then devoted her life to the practice of hard penance till old age with a view to obtaining salvation. Since she remained unmarried, her body is not sanctified by marriage; no unmarried woman can attain the "Ulitmate Bliss" Thus the unmarried woman never had the salvation in her life. Her salvation is onlyby giving birth to a son to her husband.

Equally an unmarried man is looked down upon as having no social status; an almost useless member of the society. He is not even consulted on any important subject concerning the well being of the house or the community. No work or assignment of serious nature or importance shall be given to him either. A Hindu who becomes a widower finds himself in almost the same predicament as a bachelor and he quickly remarries to establish himself as an acceptable responsible person. Every one is under the obligation of discharging the great debt to his ancestors, namely that of begetting a son.*

Though marriage is considered by the Hindus as the natural state for the generality of men and women, those who from pious motives remain unmarried are looked upon and treated with utmost respect and reverence. But it is only those Hindus who have renounced the world and have chosen to lead a life of contempla-

---

*The Sanskrit word for Son, *Putra* meaning "one who saves from "*put*" or hell—the hell into which parents are thrown without having a son.

tion can take the vows of celebacy. The Hindus who have taken vows of celebacy are supposed to remain chaste in their sexual relationship. They wander around the countryside in saffron coloured clothes, live on credulity of the Hindus. Many of them shut themselves up in seclusion and lead a life of contemplation.

But women in principle do not undertake such a vow of celebacy as Hindu men do under normal circumstances. The opinion is firmly established among the Hindus that women are only created for the multiplication of children and for the satisfaction of men's desire. All women, therefore, are obliged to marry. A wife is the very source (*mulam*) of :

artha (wealth),
dharma (duties),
kama (desire), and
moksha (salvation),

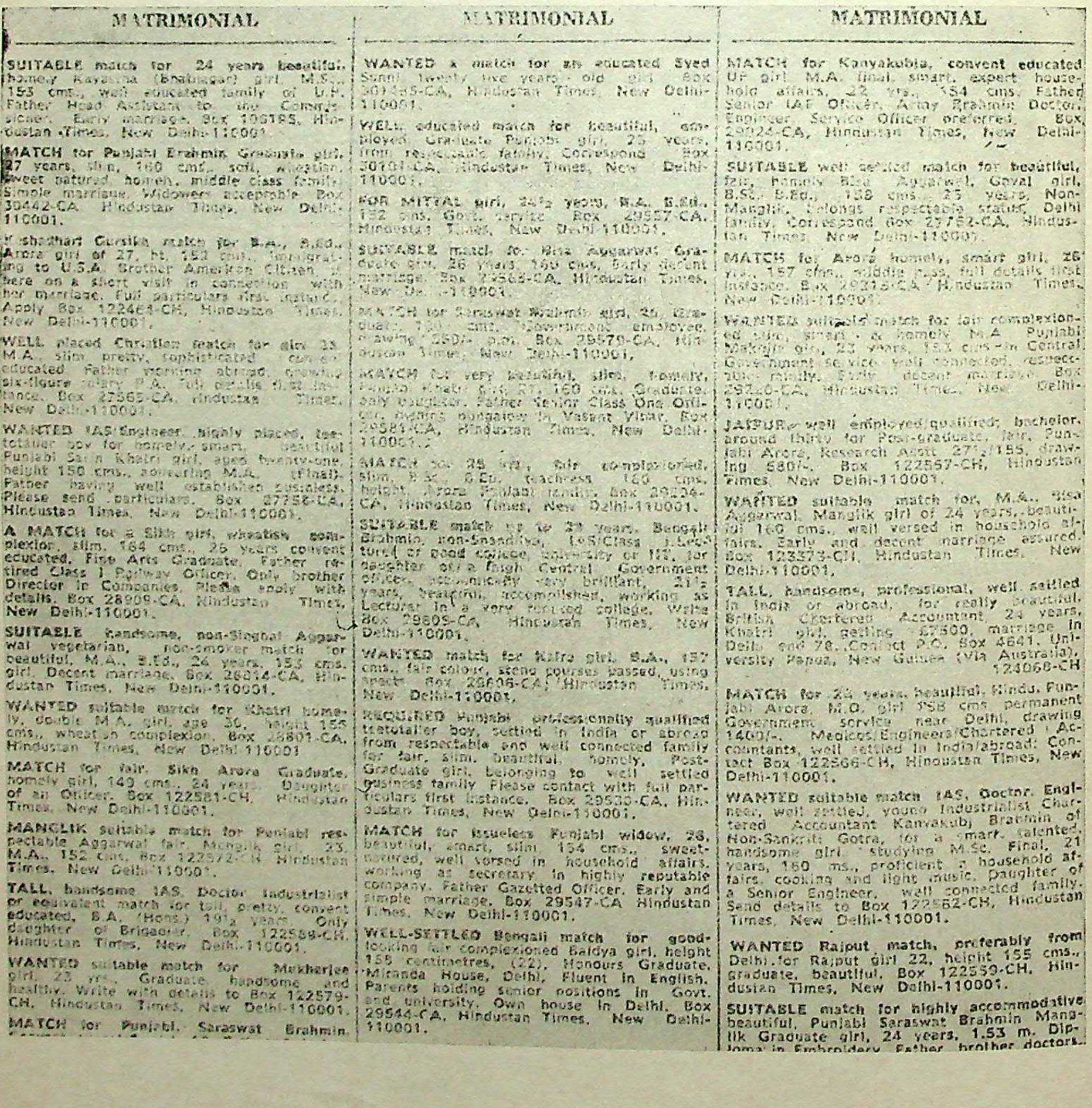
for the whole family as she bears the son. Those Hindus who have wives can only fulfill their due obligations in this world; those who have wives, truly lead a family life, those who have wives can be happy; and those who have wives can render a fuller life.

Marriageable Age

According to the recent statutory order the bridegroom has to complete the age of 21 years and the bride the age of 18 years at the time of marriage. This provision has been incorporated in the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 (as amended). Still in the villages the girl would be bethrothed to a youngman of her own caste in their childhood agreeable to the custom and unbroken tradition of the Hindu community. The girl would be brought up usually in her parents' home after the initial marriage ceremony till the age of puberty (13-14 years) when after great ceremony of actual marriage she would go back to her husband's home.

The Hindus follow Manu's edict that the bridegroom should be older than his bride. Neither any social custom nor any statutory law has prevented an old man marrying a young girl. Widow marriage has not yet been looked with great favour in the Hindu society except among the educated unencumbered women. So the difference in age between husband and wife becomes enormous when an old widower has no other choice but either to marry a young girl or not to marry at all.

However, monogomy is the rule among the Hindus. The selection of a match is left solely to the discretion of the parents. The boy has little to say while the girl, with a rare exception, has none at all. Now-a-days newspapers carry matrimonial advertisements both for bride and groom column after column for the initial contacts. Some specimen advertisements are reproduced from leading dailies of New Delhi. Newspapers are great match-makers in India today.



MATRIMONIAL

SUITABLE match for 24 years beautiful, homely Kayastha (Bhatnagar) girl, M.Sc., 153 cms., well educated family of U.P. Father Head Assistant to the Commissioner. Early marriage. Box 106185, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATCH for Punjabi Brahmin Graduate girl, 27 years, slim, 160 cms., soft, wheatish, sweet natured, homely, middle class family. Simple marriage. Widowers acceptable. Box 30442-CA Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

Keshadhari Gursikh match for B.A., B.Ed., Arora girl of 27, ht. 153 cms., immigrating to U.S.A. Brother American Citizen, is here on a short visit in connection with her marriage. Full particulars first instance. Apply Box 122464-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WELL placed Christian match for girl 23, M.A., slim, pretty, sophisticated, convent educated. Father working abroad, drawing six-figure salary P.A. Full details first instance. Box 27565-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED IAS/Engineer, highly placed, teetotaller boy for homely, smart, beautiful Punjabi Sarin Khatri girl, aged twenty-one, height 150 cms., appearing M.A. (Final). Father having well established business. Please send particulars. Box 27758-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

A MATCH for a Sikh girl, wheatish complexion, slim, 164 cms., 26 years convent educated, Fine Arts Graduate. Father retired Class I Railway Officer. Only brother Director in Companies. Please apply with details. Box 28909-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

SUITABLE handsome, non-Singhal Aggarwal vegetarian, non-smoker match for beautiful, M.A., B.Ed., 24 years, 153 cms. girl. Decent marriage. Box 28814-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED suitable match for Khatri homely, double M.A. girl, age 30, height 155 cms., wheatish complexion. Box 28801-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001

MATCH for fair, Sikh Arora Graduate, homely girl, 149 cms., 24 years. Daughter of an Officer. Box 122581-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MANGLIK suitable match for Punjabi respectable Aggarwal fair, Manglik girl, 23, M.A., 152 cms. Box 122572-CH Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

TALL, handsome IAS, Doctor, Industrialist or equivalent match for tall, pretty, convent educated, B.A. (Hons.) 19½ years. Only daughter of Brigadier. Box 122588-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED suitable match for Mukherjee girl, 23 yrs., Graduate, handsome and healthy. Write with details to Box 122579-CH. Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATCH for Punjabi, Saraswat Brahmin.

MATRIMONIAL

WANTED a match for an educated Syed Sunni twenty five years old girl. Box 30145-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WELL educated match for beautiful, employed, Graduate Punjabi girl, 25 years, from respectable family. Correspond Box 30101-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

FOR MITTAL girl, 24½ years, B.A. B.Ed., 152 cms. Govt. service. Box 29557-CA. Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

SUITABLE match for Bisa Aggarwal Graduate girl, 26 years, 160 cms, Early decent marriage. Box 29563-CA. Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATCH for Saraswat Brahmin girl, 25, Graduate, 150 cms. Government employee, drawing 350/- p.m. Box 29579-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATCH for very beautiful, slim, homely, Punjabi Khatri girl, 27, 160 cms. Graduate, only daughter. Father Senior Class One Officer, owning bungalow in Vasant Vihar. Box 29581-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATCH for 25 yrs., fair complexioned, slim, B.Sc., B.Ed., teacher, 160 cms. height, Arora Punjabi family. Box 29524-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

SUITABLE match up to 29 years, Bengali Brahmin, non-Shandilya, IAS/Class I Lecturer of good college, university or IIT, for daughter of a high Central Government officer, academically very brilliant, 21½ years, beautiful, accomplished, working as Lecturer in a very reputed college. Write Box 29809-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED match for Kalra girl, B.A., 157 cms., fair colour, steno courses passed, using specs. Box 29606-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

REQUIRED Punjabi professionally qualified teetotaller boy, settled in India or abroad from respectable and well connected family for fair, slim, beautiful, homely, Post-Graduate girl, belonging to well settled business family. Please contact with full particulars first instance. Box 29530-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATCH for issueless Punjabi widow, 28, beautiful, smart, slim, 154 cms., sweet-natured, well versed in household affairs, working as secretary in highly reputable company. Father Gazetted Officer. Early and simple marriage. Box 29547-CA Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WELL-SETTLED Bengali match for good-looking fair complexioned Baidya girl, height 155 centimetres, (22), Honours Graduate, Miranda House, Delhi, Fluent in English. Parents holding senior positions in Govt. and university. Own house in Delhi. Box 29544-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATRIMONIAL

MATCH for Kanyakubja, convent educated UP girl, M.A. final, smart, expert household affairs, 22 yrs., 154 cms. Father Senior IAF Officer. Army Brahmin Doctor, Engineer, Service Officer preferred. Box 29924-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

SUITABLE well settled match for beautiful, fair, homely Bisa Aggarwal, Goyal girl, B.Sc. B.Ed., 158 cms., 25 years, Non-Manglik. Belongs respectable status, Delhi family. Correspond Box 27762-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

MATCH for Arora homely, smart girl, 26 yrs., 157 cms., middle class, full details first instance. Box 29315-CA Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED suitable match for fair complexioned slim, smart & homely M.A. Punjabi Manglik girl, 23 years, 153 cms in Central Government service well connected, respectable family. Early decent marriage. Box 29720-CA, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

JAIPUR well employed/qualified, bachelor, around thirty for Post-graduate, fair, Punjabi Arora, Research Asstt. 27½/155, drawing 580/-. Box 122557-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED suitable match for, M.A., Bisa Aggarwal, Manglik girl of 24 years, beautiful 160 cms., well versed in household affairs. Early and decent marriage assured. Box 123373-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

TALL, handsome, professional, well settled in India or abroad, for really beautiful, British Chartered Accountant, 24 years, Khatri girl, getting £7500, marriage in Delhi end 78. Contact P.O. Box 4641, University Papua, New Guinea (Via Australia). 124068-CH

MATCH for 24 years, beautiful, Hindu, Punjabi Arora, M.D. girl 158 cms permanent Government service near Delhi, drawing 1400/-. Medicos/Engineers/Chartered Accountants, well settled in India/abroad. Contact Box 122566-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED suitable match IAS, Doctor, Engineer, well settled, young Industrialist Chartered Accountant Kanyakubj Brahmin of Non-Sankriti Gotra, for a smart, talented, handsome girl studying M.Sc. Final, 21 years, 160 cms., proficient in household affairs, cooking and light music. Daughter of a Senior Engineer, well connected family. Send details to Box 122562-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

WANTED Rajput match, preferably from Delhi, for Rajput girl 22, height 155 cms., graduate, beautiful. Box 122559-CH, Hindustan Times, New Delhi-110001.

SUITABLE match for highly accommodative, beautiful, Punjabi Saraswat Brahmin Manglik Graduate girl, 24 years, 1.53 m. Diploma in Embroidery. Father, brother doctors.

Conditions For a Hindu Marriage

A marriage may be solemnized between two Hindus, if the following conditions are fulfilled, namely :

- (i) neither man nor woman has a spouse living at the time of marriage ;
- (ii) at the time of marriage, neither man nor woman :
    - (a) is incapable of giving a valid consent to it in consequence of unsoundness of mind; or
    - (b) though capable of giving a valid consent has been suffering from mental disorder of such a kind or to such an extent as to be unfit for marriage and the procreation of children; or
    - (c) has been subject to recurrent attacks of insanity or epilepsy;
- (iii) the man has completed the age of 21 years and the woman the age of 18 years at the time of marriage;
- (iv) both man and woman are not within the degrees of "prohibited relationship"* unless the custom or usage governing each of them permits of a marriage between the two;
- (v) both man and woman are not *Sapinda* of each other unless the custom or usage governing each of them.

What's Prohibited Relationship ?*

Full blood, half-blood and uterine blood relationships between the bridegroom and the bride are considered to be prohibited relationship for contracting a marriage between the parties.

"Full blood" includes two persons who are related to each other if they are descended from a common ancestor by the same wife.

The "half-blood" includes two persons who are said to be related to each other if they are descended from a common ancestor but by different wives.

Sapinda Agnate

The word, *Sapinda* (Agnate) has been aptly described in the Hindu Scriptures in the following manner :

"*Sapinda* relationship arises (between two persons through their being) connected by particles of one body. Thus the son stands in *Sapinda* relationship to his father because the particles (genes) of his father's body having entered his. In the like manner stands the grandson in *Sapinda* relationship to his paternal grand-father and the rest because through his father, genes of his grand-father's body have entered into his own. Just so is the son, in *Sapinda* relation of his mother, because genes of his mother's body have entered into his own. Likewise the grandson in *Sapinda* relationship to his maternal grand-father and the rest, through his mother. So also is the nephew in *Sapinda* relation to his maternal aunt's uncle's and the rest because of genes of the same body (the maternal grand father's) have entered into his and their; likewise does he stand in *Sapinda* relationship with paternal uncle and aunt and the rest.

---

*they shall not be agnates.

"So also the wife and husband are *Sapinda* relation to each other because they together beget one body (the son). In like manner, brother's wives are also *Sapinda* relation to each other, because they produce one body (the son) with those severally who have sprung from one body. Therefore, one ought to know that whenever the word *Sapinda* is used (there exists between the persons to whom it is applied) a connection with one body either immediately or by descent." (*Vijanesvara*)

Let the bridegroom leave who is fifth from the mother or seventh from the father, or who is third from the mother and fifth from the father depending upon the custom and usage of a family. According to Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, *Sapinda* relationship extends to any person as far as the third generation (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the mother and the fifth (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the father, the line being traced upwards in each case from the person concerned, who is to be counted as the first generation.

The Hindus have always been known for their reverence to their ancestors and his concept of the 'same body' extends not only literally *i.e.* to brother and sister, but to those having a common ancestor. The brother and sister are of course created by the same body and hence are of the same body.

But the Hindus also include their ancestors in the 'same body'. Thus *Sapinda* relationship means that there is a common ancestor. There is an objection against the cross-cousin marriage *i.e.* marrying maternal uncle's daughters (daughters of the father's sisters, mother's sisters, etc.) have already been prohibited. Marriage of a Hindu Brahmin with a Sudra woman is disallowed. Yet there are innumerble evidences of higher caste men marrying not only Sudras but even foreigners and from different religions—Muslims and Christians.

What's A *Gotra* (Lineage) ?

A Hindu must marry in his own "*varna*" (caste) only but not descended from a family having a common *gotra* (lineage). *Gotra*, it is said, is the latest ancestor or one of the latest ancestors of a person by whose name his family has been known for generations. *Gotra* is constituted by the Hindu saint or saints who lived in the remotest past and who were the most illustrious and who where generally the ancestors of the "*Gotra*" or the family.

Gotra really means "herd" of family or "clan." The *gotra* of a family is said to be named after the great saint who actually founded the family from immemorial past. It is said that originally there were a few *gotras* in existence. But latter on, as the population went on multiplying more persons attained fame on account of their accomplishment and subsequently *more Gotras* came into being just as to identify the particular family.

No Hindu shall marry a maid from within his own *gotra* but she must be from the same caste. A Brahmin should marry a Brahmin. A "Banerjee" cannot marry another "Banerjee" because they belong to the same *gotra*. A "Banerjee" can marry a "Mukherjee" or *vice versa*. A Sudra should marry another Sudra.

This is the custom among the high castes. They are all supposed to know the *gotra* or the root from whence they sprang; that is to say, they know who was their ancient saint from whom they descended. In order to avoid intermixture with a daughter of descendant of their original stock, the Hindus find a reason for marrying into a different *gotra* (root) within their caste. Marriage with a stranger cannot be considered under any pretext in a Hindu society. Both the bride and the groom must be known to each other's family and to their respective communities. Hindu marriage is not between two individuals. It is a marriage between two families or two communities. Marriage is an alliance for peace and prosperity. It is a holy act of friendship.

Why Such Restrictions in Hindu Marriage ?

These taboos are designed for restricting free-marital relationship. Their psychological origin lies in the horror of having sex relations between parents and off-springs, and between brothers and sisters.

The "*Dharma-Sastras*" of the Hindus have declared that sex-relations with mother or with sister is a heineous sin (*mahapapa*) for a person who has committed such a crime. There is no other way of explation but by burning himself or by throwing himself into fire.

The whole system has been gradually simplified that persons related with each other beyond three degree on the mother side and beyond fifth degree on the father's side are allowed to marry.

The fear of the possible harmful effects of inbreeding, if such marriages are allowed, seems to have, however, a scientific explanation and justification. The union of man and woman closely related by blood ties is a union of similar hereditary traits, and if the ancestry of the two is good, their off-spring will receive, so to speak a "double-dose" of the good traits of their ancestors.

At the other extreme, however, if the stock of each carries some undesirable traits or others from that ancestry, the off-springs are likely to be doubly the sufferer from it. It is in view of such difficulties that it is necessary to take the precaution on the genetic side of ascertaining the hereditary traits of the parties to be on the safer side.

An Ideal Bride and Bridegroom

A bride who is neither a *Sapinda* on the mother's side nor belongs to the same *gotra* as the father, is recommended to a high caste Hindu for wedlock and conjual union.

The bride must have both of her parents alive; she should be younger than the groom by three years at least; she should belong to a family of good character; of good means and large with many relatives who are attached to each other with love and affection. She should have many relatives, both on father's side as well as on the mother's side.

In selecting a bride, the bridegroom should carefully avoid the following families, be they ever so great or rich :

(i) one which neglects the worship of sacred Fire-God ;
(ii) one in which no male children are born ;
(iii) one in which the *Vedas* are not studied ;
(iv) one (the member) which has thick hair on the body ;
(v) those which are subject to hemorphoids, phithiśis, weakness of digestion, epilepsy or white and black leprosy.

"Let him not marry a maid (with) reddish hair, nor one who has a redundent member, nor one who is sickly, nor one either with no hair (on the body) or too much, nor one who is garrulous or has red eyes."

"Let him wed a famale free from bodily defects, one who has an agreeable name, the graceful gaite of a swan (*hamsa*) or of an elephant, a moderate (quality of) hair on the body and on the head, small teeth and delicate figure and soft voice." (*Smriti*)

According to Manu, the bride should come of a good family and faultless lineage. The bride to be selected must not have been already given anyone before. and she must be a virgin, and has had no sexual relationship with any other man.

A bridegroom must be one whose powers of virility are carefully ascertained. A bridegroom must be fit to be married, if his collar bone, his knees are strongly made, if his shoulders and his hair also strongly made, if the shape of his neck is stout and his thigh and skin strong and if his gait and voice is full of vigour. The youngman has also to undergo an examination with regard to his virility. He should be wealthy. He should be educated and he should be handsome and healthy. He should be religious in temperament.

Guardianship in Marriage

The most approved form of marriage is, of course, the gift of the maiden by the father or the guardian to the bridegroom. The father, the grand-father, the brother, the kinsman and the mother, the order in which they are mentioned, have the right to give a young maiden in marriage provided the giver be balanced both in physical and mental conditions and not insane.

Where the consent of a guardian in marriage is necessary for a bride, persons entitled to give such consent shall be the following in the order specified hereunder, namely :

(i) the father;
(ii) the mother; (in the absence of father)
(iii) the paternal grand-father (in the absence of both father and mother);

(iv) the paternal grand-mother (in the absence of grand-father);

(v) the brother by full blood (as between brothers, the eldest being preferred)

(vi) the brother by half blood (as between brother by half blood, the elder being preferred);
provided that the bride is living with him and is being brought up by him,

(vii) the paterdal uncle by full blood (as between paternal uncle the elder being preferred);

(viii) the paternal uncle by half blood (as between paternal uncle by the half blood the elder being preferred)
provided that the bride is living with him and is being brought up by him;

(ix) the maternal great father;

(x) the maternal great mother;

(xi) the maternal uncle by full-blood, as between maternal uncle the elder being preferred;
provided that the bride is living with him and is being brought up by him;

(xii) no person shall be entitled to act as a guardian in marriage under this provision unless such person has himself completed his/her twentyfirst year.

(xiii) Where any person entitled to be the guardian in marriage under the foregoing provisions refuses or is for any reason unable or unfit to act as such, the person next in order shall be entitled to be the guardian.

(xiv) In the absence of any such person as is referred to in sub-sections, the consent of a guardian shall not be necessary for a marriage.

Nothing in provision shall effect the jurisdiction of a court to prohibit by injunction an intended marriage, if in the interest of the bride for whose marriage consent is required, the court thinks necessary to do so.

A Hindu Marriage is an Arranged Marriage

The spontaneous choosing is not choosing at all. Youngmen and women tend to be drawn to each other by mere accidental propinquity, they do not primarily think but they simply feel strongly for each other. As a result they do not and cannot look ahead; they fail to consider whether they are physically or emotionally fit for one another; often they either do not perceive or ignore their differences in race, culture, habits, aptitude, education, religion, interests and even in ideological background. Consequently their choice so far as they do choose, is largely non-deliberative.

In reality, they do not choose at all, but merely "fall in love" and often fall in the Cupid's romance actually mars their whole life. It is highly emotional and tense in relationship and it leads to failures in marriage. As a result of free choice, ideal marriage are rare in the West. This kind of romantic marriage normally does not take into account the biological and cultural differences between man and woman; on the other hand, a Hindu marriage is not by mere choice between the bridegroom and the bride. When both the parents of the bride and the groom have agreed to enter into a matrimonial alliance, it is not merely a marriage between two individuals. It is a marriage between two families and may be at times between two communities. When the parents of the both the bride and the groom have given their approval for such a marriage, betels and sweets are distributed to all those who are present on an auspicious day as fixed earlier from the study of the horoscopes and the readings from the Almanac.

When the preliminaries are over, the parents from both sides begin to think of making preparations for the wedding in consultatation with the Brahmin priest. Gold and silver ornaments are ordered for the couple after endless series of discussion on dowry between the parents of the bride and the groom.

The wedding costumes are also specially got ready. For relatives new clothes are purchased for the occasion as an evidence of joy and happiness equally shared by all the members of the families.

The Hindu Wedding Fanfare

When everything is ready, a canopy or a pandal is put up in front of the house. This pandal is decorated with flowers, green leaves, coloured papers, electric bulbs. A canopy is raised and is beautifully decorated. The ceilings of the canopy are ornamented with buntings while the poles are hung with garlands and bouquets of flowers. They are also decorated tastefully.

India no longer has its Maharajahs but on the wedding night, the bridegroom receives all the princely attention of bygone days. With a sword hanging from his right side, and a young son of the groom's sister sitting with him as minister-in-waiting, the bridegroom rides a white mare exquisitely decorated with ornaments and velvets and moves towards the bride's residence in the evening for the wedding. On the wedding night, the bridegroom is considered a warrior—He is on his sole mission to win a sweet-heart as his wife.

The wedding procession is elegant in appearance. All the members of the groom's entourage are simply sparkling in their new and gorgeous dress, costly jewellery adores most of the women in the procession. Everybody of the groom family will come to the wedding in their best attire. For their identification in the crowd the close relations of the groom wear a pink turban. As the procession moves on slowly in the main streets of the city, it lets off fire works and crackers. The roads are often blocked as the jubilant members start dancing and singing to the bands hired for the occasion. They dance and sing all the way to the bride's residence.

Until some years ago, the entire wedding festivities would take a week to complete. Now-a-days the wedding ceremony is over within a day due to economic constraint and simple expendiercy. Most marriages are still arranged by parents, although occasionally, it is permitted for either the prospective bridegroom or the prospective bride to say "No", in advance. Dowry is illegal; but it is common for bride's family to provide financial security for the couple. With the need to buy expensive sarees and various types of elegant jewellery for the bride as well as numerous household effects for their new home, marriages are costly for the bride's family which also has to foot the bill for the reception.

Most middle class families go into a debt as a result of this practice of dowry for the wedding. Still on the wedding night all these problems are forgotten and everyone has a gay time.

As the groom approaches his bride's residence, her close relatives come forward and welcome the members of the groom by garlanding each one. In "*Milni*" the father of the bride garlands the father of the groom, the maternal uncle of the bride to the maternal uncle of the groom, brothers of the bride to the brothers of the groom and so on. Following the "*Milni*" comes "*Jaymala*" when the bride garlands the groom and officially welcomes the groom to her house for the wedding. They burn incense to ward off evil spirit and break open a coconut for good luck. Then comes a massive feast with the groom's family eating first in deference to the higher status of the bridegroom at the ceremony. The bridegroom and the bride remain on fast until the wedding is solemnized.

In the background, the Hindu priests make preparations for the marriage which takes place at an auspicious time fixed by the astrologers who have studied the bride and groom's horoscopes. Sometimes, the wedding takes place in the middle of the night; in fact at any hour of the night depending on the astrologers' verdict. Should the horoscopes of the bride and the goom clash, the proposed marriage is forbidden.

The head priest begins the actual ceremony by asking all those present if anyone has objections to the proposed wedding. With this obstacle surmounted, the rituals start in front of the sacred Fire (Agni-God).

First, the bride's father washes the groom's feet while the priests recite holy scriptures comparing the groom to Lord Vishnu, the Hindu God of protection. Next, the bride's father places his daughter in his lap and formally gives her as a gift to the groom by bringing their hands together. This is known as "*Kanyadan*". The bridegroom accepts this gift. He responds by tying a sacred yellow thread around the bride's neck with three knots—symbolic of three pledges that he will love her; he will protect her; he will always be with her in happiness and sorrow.

When the bridegroom accepts the gift of bride, he says this hymn :

> Who offered this maiden ?
> To whom is she offered ?
> *Kama* (God of love) give her
> That I may love her.

Yes, love is the giver
and, love is the acceptor
Enter thou (On my bride) the
Ocean of Love
With love, then
I receive thee,
May she remain thine
Thine own, O God of Love !
Verily, thou art (Oh my bride)
Prosperity itself
May the heaven bestow thee
May the earth receive thee.

Thereafter the father of the bride exhorts the bride-groom not to fail the bride in his pursuit of *Dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, and the groom replies three times that he shall never fail her in these.

Finally, with the bride's *saree* tied to the *dhoti* of the groom, the couple walk around the holy fire. As they take their seventh round, the marriage stands solemnized. The divine witness of this solemn occasion is the Sacred Fire. While taking these seven steps (*Saptapadi*) they recite prayerfully the following :

First step is for life together,
Second step is for wealth,
Third step is for more abundance (wealth),
Fourth step is for happiness in life,
Fifth step is for offsprings,
Sixth step is for a long wedded life,
Seventh step is for lifemate.
Thus do they go together for ever and ever more;
The bridegroom chants once again :
"I take thy hand in mine
Yearning for happiness
I ask thee
To live with me
As thy husband
Till both of us
With age, grow old...
That I may fulfill
My *dharma* of the householder
With thee."

But the wedding festivities are far from over. For the next couple of hours, the bride and groom and others next to them jointly pray. The groom keeps the sacred fire burning by offering "ghee" and grain to the flames as the priest recites the scriptures. With the prayers over, relatives and friends shower rice and flower petals on the couple to bless them. Then they receive all gifts and presents from relations in a traditional manner.

Once again the astrologers come to the scene as they determine the exact moment the bride and the groom should be leaving immediately after the early hours of the morning.

Thus a Hindu marriage is solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies where such rites and ceremonies include the "*Saptapadi*" (that is taking seven steps by the bride and the groom together before the sacred Fire) that completes the marriage sacrament. After the final marriage rites are duly carried out at the bride's parents' house, the wedded couple start out on their journey next day early morning to the groom's house and this is also done ceremoniously and with due rituals.

Responsibility of Bride

At the time of leaving the house, the father of the bride gives to the bride the parting advice concerning her household in the groom's house. She is asked to be modest. She has to conduct herself with grace and charm. She has to wake up at dawn and to attend to all domestic responsibilities including milking the cow. She has to cast her eyes downward and keep her feet close together.

Before marriage the Hindu women have been given education, if not in school or college, but at home at least. They are trained in the arts of house-keeping and they learn in their teens how to conduct themselves.

The married women are really the better halves of the family. They retain their individuality while taking an active part in all departments of family life. The house wife's chief care is the breeding of her babes and the rearing of a new generation fit to accept the responsibilities of the Hindu tradition and culture.

She is always the centre of happiness, and the abode of grace, loved by her husband and beloved of her children.

The education for the Hindu women aims at making them good and kind rather than clever and learned. They mix with men freely in social and cultural activities. According to the Hindu culture marriage is not for lust, but for domestic life and progeny. Marriage is a mode of life thet may be continued for ever. In her husband's home she holds a respected position and she is at the head of domestic affairs. The measure of her success is the extent to which she can identify herself with her husband's home. The husband is her natural teacher and it is held that it is his duty to teach her the Hindu Scriptures. The Hindu wife is subordinate to her husband. In childhood she is subject to her father, in her youth to her husband and when her husband is dead to her son. She is thus dependent on someone or the other at every stage of her life. She is entirely devoted to the pleasure and good of her husband. At the same time wife is respected by her husband and every other members of household of his house.

When women are honoured, it is the belief of the Hindus, the Gods are pleased but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards.

However, a woman has to wait on her husband's return; when he is weary, she has to rub his feet. She has to rise from bed before he does and eat all meals after he has taken.

The World of new Bride in A Joint Family

Relations between the newly married couple takes a long time to settle down. They are strangers to each other. They have little privacy in a joint-family system to enable them to develop understanding and love for each other. There are few opportunities in the house in the presence of elders to sit down casually for themselves and to discuss any important matter of mutual interest or excitement. As both of them are young they have a very minor role in the total responsibility of the household. In the presence of father, mother, big brothers and their wives the newly married couple are really insignificant entities. They would not be consulted on any matters except that might directly concern them. The family politics are dominated by the elders and more experienced generations. Under these circumstances these young people are left to themselves; yet they are in the midst of people wherever they go. They do not get even a moment for themselves in privacy for courtship. Before marriage, courtship was unknown to them as there is no social sanction for courtship before marriage. Lovemaking is unheard of in the presence of elders. Lots of restraint are visible in the emotional expression of love making between the the newly married couple. If they can steal a kiss, it is an excitement. They can hug passionately in a secluded corner of the house but they cannot avoid the watchful eyes of the family members. The elders in the house would not appreciate their closeness in their presence.

They enjoy a subordinate relationship in the house. There is no scope of disagreement between the couple. No anger can be expressed between them. They are not allowed to argue. If any unpleasant situation arises between them, the elders would detect it earlier. They will be put to the final authority of the elders. The bride would always talk in soft and subdued voice so as not to be heard by the elders. This is out of regards for the elders and also as a party of family discipline. It will be considered immodest and ill mannered for the young bride to talk loudly. The problm of lack of privacy and lack of opportunity to meet together or to enjoy companionship and understanding for eaeh other is compensated by the fact of early emphasis on children. This aspect of Hindu family has been elaborately detailed out by Messers P.D. Devanandan and M.M. Thomas in their book, "*The Changing Pattern of Family in India*" (Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society—Bangalore, 1966). They stated that after one or two Children, the couple settles down to a routine life. If the children happen to be sons, the wife has secured an honoured place in the family. Children also become the source of common joy, happiness as well as concern to the husband and wife.

During this period closer understanding and companionship develop between the couple. After the death of the mother-in-law, the relationship between wife and husband may become quite intimate and strong. With the increased emphasis on common family, social duties, their relationship, grows with years even if, the partners do not have physical charm for each other. Real love between them developed only after having the first child. Since the daughter-in-law (wife) is eventually expected to manage the family affairs, a certain amount of power struggle gradually develops between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The latter is considered an outsider influencing the son who has been loyal and faithful to his mother all his life.

Underlying this rivalry and jealousy there is a proverbial power struggle in a Hindu family between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The mother-in-law enjoys this authority and the daughter-in-law tries to capture it from her mother-in-law. This power struggle in a Hindu family is a common phenomenon. The mother-in-law does not want to lose it; while the daughter-in-law will not miss an opportunity to grab it. It is the most painful feature. At times this leads to the final break up of the family or greater tension, leading to emotional disorder in the midst of apparent harmony among the members of the family.

Before the arrival of the new bride, the mother-in-law did most of the work in the house by herself; but the arrival of daughter-in-law has increased the number of workers in the family without much increase in the total work-load. Therefore, there is always a camplaint that the mother-in-law enjoys leisure at the cost of the new bride. Such criticism increases as the physical strength of the mother-in-law decreases without corresponding decline in her authority. Also, the new bride comes from different and far off place, she does not have any supporter in this family to back her up in her claims for more freedom except perhaps her husband, who himself is new to her. Therefore, there are often only two ways to maintain smooth family relations; either to submit to the mother-in-law completely and not to care for her own freedom or to gain her favour by some other subtle ways; and in this way she can avoid a direct confrontation.

In case there are already daughters-in-law present in the family, often rivalry develops between them. They may all try to win the favour and support of the mother-in-law. However, sometimes, the daughters-in-law join hands in friendship and in alliance against the tyranny and unjust treatment of the mother-in-law. Often such friendship may fall apart after the death of the mother-in-law.

Situation often becomes complicated when the bride finds an unmarried or widowed sister of her husband in the family. The Sanskrit word used for sister-in-law (husband's own sister) is "*Nanad*" meaning "very hard to please." It seems that this conflict has always been there either in the form of complaining against each other or a direct conflict over some household duties.

On the one hand, the cordiality of their relationships is not completely absent by the fact that the wife knows that she will be in charge of the household someday, and the sister-in-law's (husband's sister) real home is elsewhere when she is married. The sister has been her mother's right hand for so long; but when she gets married she will leave her mother's home and settle down with her husband somewhere. Nevertheless, the sister-in-law acts as a check aganist the young wife's freedom; because she is still the most trusted member of her mother and brother.

Often soon after her marriage, the wife takes revenge through her husband by curtailing the help the sister ought to get from her brother. When the ages of the young bride and the sister-in-law are close, the conflicts are often great, unless some sort of friendship develops over the years between them.

The life of the new bride is not always that disturbing. There are certain other factors of life that are of much greater interest and significance. For an example, the relation between the young wife and her young brother-in-law is very friendly and cordial indeed. The word, "*devara*" (husband's brother) means "playmate." It signifies this cordial relationship between them. In the common language there are many phrases and expressions to indicate that there is considerable opportunity for friendship between the two. "*Devara*" (husband's young brother) for the first time has the opportunity of seeing an unrelated young female staying in the family. The brother, husband, parents and everyone else in the family expect the "*devara*" to be friendly and entertaining to the young bride. *Devara* is the only one among the male members of the family from whom the wife dose not observe veil (*ghungat*) because of the nature of sex segregation and the distinction of age groupings, that *devara* has a good chance for joking and playing with the young bride. Both the parties have freedom of speech for jokes and jests. Although in many other ways, her life may be dull, the new bride finds through the "*devara*" some moments of freshness of living in the family.

Her relationship with the elder-brothers-in-law and husband's uncle is not of a playful nature. It is somewhat more formal. The moment she confronts them, she covers her face and head with saree-ends and she shows extreme modesty and decency. Seldom do they address each other by their first name or even talk openly face to face, unless of course, the bride has become the mother of several children.

The relationship between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law is of a reserved nature. She is expected to be respectful and obedient to the father-in-law. She must cover her head and face with her saree-ends and she should retire in one corner of the house when she knows that her father-in-law is arriving from outside. She should observe strict seclusion in his presence. She does not talk unless she is asked or questioned by the father-in-law. The father-in-law, on the other hand always indicates the inmates of the house about his arrival before he actually enters the house. He expects some kind of obedience and reverence from his daughter-in-law as she gives to her own father at home.

Sexual Life of the Couple

Sexuality is not looked upon as a mere vent for the animal passions of the male or female; but a refined mutual relationship for the satisfaction of body, mind and soul of both husband and wife. Love play is manifold and thoroughly classified in the "*kamasutra*" (code of love making defines no less than sixteen types of kiss). *Kamasutra* remarkable work of Vatsyayana which was written in the early centuries of the Christian era, detailed instructions on erotic technique, aphrodisiac recipes and charms, and much more valuable information about the life of the early Hindus. From texts such as these and from writings in countless literature, you may learn much about the sexual life of the Hindu couple. There is much tenderness in love-making, though it often culminates in very violent embraces; it is a favourite poetic tradition to describe lovers of both sexes as displaying the tokens of their passion to their close confidential friends in the form of marks of nails and teeth on the delicate parts of the body.

The erotic preoccupations of ancient Hindus are made evident in art and literature. The ideal of faminine beauty even today is different from the slender and more boyish type of modern European and American women. The Hindu ideal woman should be thick-thighed, broad hipped, but very slender-wasted and with heavy and round breasts. The physical quality of Hindu woman seems to have been evidently chosen for the sexual satisfaction of man. The poets love to describe their heroine in lucid frankness. They do, however, observe certain conventional restraints.

The preliminaries of sexual intercourse are treated with care and it is recollected in tranquility in general terms; but the act itself is rarely if ever described in detail until very recently. Detailed descriptions occur in vernacular poetry but the poets of great Hindu literature have preferred to leave something at least unsaid. An example of the better side of the Hindu sexual life is borrowed from the *Kamasutra* :

"For the first three days after their marriage husband and wife should sleep on the hard bed and abstain from intercourse.... For the next seven days they should bathe to the sound of music, adorn themselves, dine together and pay their respects to their relatives and to other people who attended their wedding."

On the fourth day some rites are performed, preparatory to the meeting of the newly wedded couple. These rites are the foetus-laying ceremony. The husband offers nine expiatory oblations to Agni (sacred Fire). Atfer this sacrifice to the sacred Fire is completed, he mates with her while reciting the following mantras :

"United are minds (*mana*)
United are hearts (*hridaya*)
United our navel (*nabhih*)

United our body and skin (*tanu*)
That bond shall be indissoluble."

The husband embraces her while saying the mantras : Be devoted to me, be my companion for my life."

He then prays to the God Vishnu, Agni and Indra for the birth of a male offspring—the most valiant of his kin, he also recites the verse :

"I do with these the work that is sacred to God ;
May an embryo enter the womb ;
May a child is born without any difficulty
With limbs, not blind, not lame,
Not sucked out by the devil."

This concludes the ritual part of the after marriage ceremony. Sexual relationship is regarded as a serious social and personal duty devoid of selfish profligacy or lusty sexual indulgence. Hereafter the couple start their career as keepers of the home wherein they do their best to fulfill their vow not to fail each other in their pursuit of "*dharma*", "*artha*", "*kama*" for the sake of achieving "*moksha*."

The success of marriage depends on where the love between husband and wife adds lustre to both, and where it is a source of joy to families of both—that is the only type of marriag which is worthy. Thus the essential and significant duties of the Hindu marriage are to preserve the continuity of the family. The Hindu marriage is not between two individuals alone. It is a marriage between two families. It is in fact a marriage between two communities. It is an alliance. Unlike the Western marriage, the Hindu marriage is uniquely different. The marriage is to procreate and preserve the social system, to perform ceremonies and rituals necessary thereto and to pass the torch to the next generation.

In this sense, Hinduism is essentially a domestic culture and this is one reason why the citadel of orthodoxy is to be found among the Hindu woman. This may be true with all women of all castes and creeds of the world. The proper performance of rituals and maintenance of custom is bound up with the family status and self-respect.

Husband and Wife Relationship

The companionship between husband and wife is partnership. The *Rig Veda* describes married woman as a comrade (*Sakhi*) of the husband with similar interests. It speaks of husband and wife as complimentary to each other and emphasizes temperamental affinity between them. The ideal love and harmony between the husband and wife have been described by Bhavabhuti, an immortal Sanskrit poet :

"The dearest friend, the essence of all kinship, the fulfilment of all desires, a veritable treasure, the very life itself—all these is a husband to the wife and *vice versa*.

That love is uniform both in prosperity and adversity. It affords the best solace to each other. Old age does not diminish its flavour. When the veil of reserve drops down in course of time, it develops into an ever-abiding affection."

Dr. Radhakrishnan describes Hindu ideal of marriage as follows :

"The Hindu ideal of marriage is essentially a fellowship between a man and a woman who seek to live creatively in partnership for the pursuit of four great objects of life : *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*."

Marriage is a union of body and soul so close and so firmly established that both the sexes feel that it will last as long as life lasts. It is a relationship so deep and binding; so transforming the life by intensity of its fervour that the thought of a second relationship with another partner is sacrilege. For the most part, however, the moral demands of wedded life are faithfulness, loyalty, obedience and service. There is no separate standard of morality between husband and wife. Nevertheless, it is the wife who should be of one mind with the husband, like a shadow should be his companion in all good works and should always remain cheerful and mindful of household duties. Woman is an incarnation of devotion and man seems to be swayed more by honour.

Because of social and physical conditions in the rural areas of India (such as shortage of living space, crowded conditions of living and large size of family) personal intimacy on the level of companionship, is not so noticeable as loyalty, fidelity and service to the husband. The wife's only concern in life is to see that all services needed by her husband are properly performed by her, the satisfaction of her husband being her sole solace in life.

The husband is the centre of all her actions and interests. There is no question of raising a word against him even when he is found to be ill-tempered, vicious, diseased or drunk. The wife is not only attached to him as long as he is alive but even after his death; because a faithful wife can never conceive of having another husband. In fact, the wife's salvation is in her service rendered to her husband who is considered to be her living God on earth. Thus the Hindu husband is superior to his wife; although both of them take vows at the marriage ritual as equals. The supreme authority comes to be vested in the husband. So the wife's position though subordinate is very honourable. The wife is treated with utmost courtesy and respect.

The normal relations between the husband and wife are determined by the principle that there should be an absolute identity in their aesthetic, material and moral interests. Marriage vows taken by the couple also emphasize that they should invariably co-operate with each other in the realization of their aims and ambitions in all the sphere of life, wealth and spirituality. Social consciousness is outraged if a couple does not live upto these marriage vows.

If the husband is a spendthrift, it is the duty of the wife to put a gentle check on his extravagence. She is to run the household and help the husband by contributing her labour if he is poor. A wife who discharges these duties is a true wife. The Hindu wife is never supposed to contradict her husband even if she knows that he is wrong. She does not contend equality with her husband.

Second Marriage

The primary object of marriage is the continuity of family line and therefore, if the first marriage of a man does not succeed in the objectives, he is permitted to marry again even while the first wife is alive.

"Let him abandon the barren wife in the eighth year; one whose children (all) die in the tenth; one who bears daughters (only) in the eleventh; but one who is quarrelsome without delay."

But a sick wife who is kind (to her husband) and virtuous in her conduct may be superseded (only) by another wife with her own consent and must never be disgraced, according to *Manu Smriti* (Law of Manu).

Before a man contracts a second marriage, it is necessary that he should obtain the consent of the first; and she is always regarded as the chief wife and she retains all her prerogatives.

It may be remembered that for the same reason Abraham in the Old Testment took Hager to be his wife during the life time and with the consent of Sarah, his lawful wife whom God blessed with a son at her late age. Thus it is obligatory on the part of the husband to look after the first wife properly. In case the first wife does not like to stay with her husband after his second marriage, she can stay with her parents but cannot ask for maintenance liability from the hushand.

It is true to say that monogamy prevails in the Hindu society. Wife who drinks liquor, is of bad conduct, rebellious, diseased; mischievious or unfaithful may be at any time superseded by another wife. If wife shows disrespect to her husband, if she is addicted to some evil passion, she shall be deserted by her husband. He can marry again.

If the husband is away from home for a long period of time, the wife should abandon playing any game with any man or beautifying her body or joining club or festival or laughing and going to a movie or neighbour's house. She should be devoted to her husband only. A Hindu is allowed to marry any number of wives primarily for the sake of continuity of family.

Divorce

A Hindu can only put away with his legitimate wife for one reason and that is adultery. A marriage can also be annulled if it has been contracted in violation of the prohibitory degree which are laid down by customs, and which of themselvess are sufficient to nullify the union in matrimony. I do not know any Hindu being allowed to do away with his legitimate wife, however, vicious she might be, simply for the man to have a second wife. The Hindus put too serious a value on this solemn contract of marriage to allow it to be degraded to a state which would be nothing more or less tha⊂ concubinage. A Hindu and specially a Brahmin would hardly be inclined to repudiate his wife even for adultery, unless her guilts were very notorious.

As a general rule, when the wife of a Brahmin gives occasion, by injudicious behaviour for remarks of a kind damaging to her character, her friends and relatives do their utmost to excuse her conduct and to hush up all scandal about her, so as to avoid the necessity of such an extreme measure as a divorce, the disgrace of which would reflect on the whole family and community as well. In general, divorce is a rare phenomenon among the Hindus.

Grounds of Diovrce

(a) When the husband and or wife had voluntary sexual intercourse with any person other than his/her spouse; or

(b) has after solemnization by the marriage, treated his/her spouse with cruelty; or

(c) has deserted his/her spouse for a continuous period of not less than two years : or

(d) has ceased to be a husband/wife by conversion to another religion ; or

(e) has been incurably unsound in mind, or has been suffering continuously or intermittently from mental disorder of such a kind as to such an extent that his/her spouse cannot reasonably be expected to live with him/her ; or

(f) has been suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy; or

(g) has been suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form ; or

(h) has not been heard of as being alive for a period of seven years or more by those persons who would naturally have heard of it, had his/her spouse been alive.

Divorce Around the World

Wedding bells which peal today may be tolling for divorce tomorrow. One in every three or four marriages in the advanced countries split up and the trend is accelerating. Over half of all break-ups occur during the first decade of married life, with the fourth year being particularly critical. The most divorce-prone age group is 25-34 years for both sexes; but the numbers of those who divorce in middle age are climbing. In the last 20 years divorce rates have quadrupled in England and Wales, trippled in the Netherlands, more than doubled in Finland and Norway; about doubled in Belgium and Denmark; while increasing substantially in Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden and Switzerland.

In the United States, which has the highest divorce rate of all, the number of marriages doubled in the last decade reaching a total of over one million in 1976.

Most of those who divorce marry again, six out of ten re-marry and the roulette wheel starts spinning once more. All this is not a passing phenomenon, but rather a normal component of the general system of courtship and marriage resulting in what some sociologist call "chronological polygamy." Nor do the origin of high divorce rates lie in personal maladjustment on inadequacy; they are rooted in the culture and social structure of modern Western society, the influence of which has made a dent in the upper class of the modern Hindu society as well. There are thousauds of divorce cases pending in the courts of law in India for divorce.

As a report presented at recent research meeting of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) puts it :

". . . . a historic change is occuring in the nature of marriage and the family. High divorce rates are not a transient epidemic but an adaptation, and while social evolution will obviously continue, it is not easy to see how durability will again become a feature of marriage. In family life as we have known it such elements as sociability, sexuality, reproduction, child socialisation, economic dependency and cohabitation have all been fused into monogamous union which was enforced and re-inforced by law, social provision, economic necessity and customary values."

"Modern conditions and the moral sensibilities which they foster have created the basis for much more pluralistic family system in which novel pattern of domicile economic activity and domestic behaviour are emerging including the frequent occurence of divorce" the report adds.

Divorce law has come a long way indeed since the limited opportunities of yester year. While it is not instant divorce that the legislation of certain countries offers to married couples; it surely is the nearest thing. Until about the 1960s, most divorce systems were based on the concept of guilt so that in general divorce was granted only to offending spouses, and in a grudging fashion.

Recent legislative trends have produced a new common pattern through provision of divorce on no-fault grounds, such as separation or marriage breakdown. For example, New Zealand and Canada have added separation to fault grounds : while Belgium has "breakdown", "fault", and "consent". The Netherlands, England and the Federal Republic of Germany now have the single ground of marriage "breakdown", although the Dutch have retained certain 'fault' elements.

Divorce was introduced in Italy in 1970 and ratified by public referendum in 1974. The Italian example is of considerable significance reform in Catholic societies. All but three American States have adopted no-fault grounds. The Federal Republic of Germany has perhaps gone furtherst among European countries, enabling couples to obtain a divorce without any reason given at all, if both partners agree and if they have no children. Switzerland and Finland are contemplating fresh reforms similar to those of their neighbours.

The legislative trend strengthened by procedural and administrative reforms, sometimes with far-reaching effects. Thus, in England since April 1977 most divorces are dealt with not in court but through "special procedure" which means that where there are no children the court officers may handle the divorce via affidavits only.

The State is abdicating its control function and transferring effective discretion over divorce to its married citizens. As fault plays an increasingly residual part in matrimonial settlements and almony falls into disfavour, the big question is—"what happens to the liability to maintain?". How can social security systems be adapted to meet the problems that arise. How far does the responsibility of social security extend ? Is divorce to be considered as a social security "risk"?.

The International Social Security Association—which works in co-operation with the International Labour Organization from whose Geneva based headquarters it operates—has investigated the question of social security arrangements in case of divorce. In a survey covering 26 countries with developed social security systems, it looked at how the different branches of social security—survivors and old-age insurance, employment injury, family allowances, health insurance and unemployment insurance—respond to the problems of social protection arising in case of divorce.

ISSA reports that the problem is not in itself the growing number of divorced persons, but rather that not enough is being done to ensure that all—older or younger, with or without children—have equitable access to the necessary social protection and a secured income.

To be sure, certain problems arising from divorce have been recognized and divorce social security systems have developed their own methods—according to different ideologies, value systems, economic and political constraints—to provide appropriate protection. But there remain gaps in social provision and there is often time lag between reforms in divorce law and adoption of changes in social security measures, the ISSA reports say. In many cases, social security protection rests on the assumption that the husband's insurance covers his dependant spouse and family and that, once married the couple will live together ever after. Where the social security system is based essentially on the universalist principle, as in Sweden, divorce need not be too hard a material burden for women. Insurance benefits do not depend on marital status; family allowances and health care are not geared to work. But often the heaviest burden is borne by divorced women who lose the right to benefits under the insurance of their ex-spouses in social security systems which are work-oriented, as for instance, in Austria, Belgium and France.

Generally, under such systems women's rights to sickness and maternity insurance are maintained only temporarily, those for survirors' pensions usually lost. Even when women work after their divorce old-age pensions are often very low because many women have chequered work careers and still earn less than men. Women's wages can be as low as 52 per cent of men's, as in Canada, for instance, where most single-parent families are headed by women, and about 60 per cent of them are poor.

In these circumstances, the obvious solution would be to eliminate completely the concept of dependency as applied to the marriage partners who are not gainfully employed and provide social security benefits in their own right. But that would increase the social bill considerably as well as raising large administrative problems.

Another possibility is the use of voluntary insurance schemes for non-employed persons. Italians and West-Germans, for example, already have this opinion, but there are few takers. Still other proposals aim at awarding social security credits to the spouse who remains at home. France, for instance, credits extra years for pensions insurance to women who havn brought up children and thus ensures a better pension. But the whole question of "social insurance for the housewife" is a hotly debated topic.

A more practical alternative appears to be the splitting of social insurance contributions equally between husband and wife according to the years of marriage. On divorce pension rights would be divided between the spouses. Administratively, it is a feasible way to establish an individual right to social security benefits; while financially it is less expensive than other proposals to cover housewives. But very much depends on the size of the cake to be cut; there may not be enough for two.

The Federal Republic of Germany has very recently opted for such sharing of accumulated rights and the United States and Canada are reported to be exploring the same path. Divorce is not to be seen as a "risk" calling for incorporation as a contingency in social security schemes, the ISSA meeting concluded. But certain categories of divorced persons do find themselves in a no man's land, victims of the deficiencies of private maintenance and all money payments and of inadequacies in existing social security arrangements. How this gap will be closed is of great concern to those who desire for greater privacy, flexibility andc hoice of life-style.

Maintenance of Wife

The social security concept is literally unknown to Hindu society. As such a divorced wife is Hindu society has to depend entirely on the meagre maintenance allowance from her husband.

A Hindu wife shall be entitled to live separately from her husband without forfeiting her claim to maintenance :

(a) If he is guilty of desertion, that is to say, of abandoning her without reasonable cause and without her consent or against her wish or of willfully neglecting her ;

(b) If he has treated her with such cruelty as to cause a reasonable apprehension in her mind that it will be harmful or injurious to live with her husband ;

(c) If he is suffering from a virulent form of leprosy ;

(d) If he has any wife living ;

(e) If he keeps a concubine in the same house in which his wife is living or habitually resides with a concubine elsewhere ;

(f) If he has ceased to be a Hindu by conversion to another religion ;

(g) If there is any other cause justifying her living separately.

A Hindu Widow

In the Indian villages a widow is at times married to her husband's brother and it is not unreasonable to suppose that her obligations are to protect the family property and the household.

Young Hindu widows are engaged in domestic work day and night. They literally become the dependents on the family. They lead a life of despondency and misery. They are not supposed to talk to men outside the family. They have no right to go out for a dinner or to attend any social festivals except the religious ones. They are not allowed to wear any tight garments or fancy and coloured dress. They do not decorate them with ornaments or costumes of fashionable tastes. Normally, the Hindu widows wear plain and simple white sarees and white blouses. It is unseemly for the young widows to laugh or joke. They eat plain vegetarian food. Many of them do not take more than one major meal a day. They live on fresh milk and fruits. Fish, egg, meat are tabooed for the Hindu widows. In many homes they are not allowed to eat onion or garlic. All of them lead a life of austerity.

On the death of their husband, they are turned overnight the "living dead." They are asked to spend most of their time in worshipping the shivalingam, which, it is thought, would secure them a long-living husband in the next life. They live in the family, still they are detached emotionally and physically. They live for the name's sake. They have no social entity. Still they are expected not to disturb the social moral fabric by abstaining from desires.

The Hindu widows are excluded from active participation in all kinds of festivities such as weddings or family rituals. Fasting fortnightly on the 11th phase of the moon (*Ekadashi*) is universal. Similar fasting will take place on the new moon and full moon days and also on many other religious occasions. Fasting often means complete abstinence from even drinking plain water.

Malnourished, devoid of any security by their own right, shut-out from all luxury and comfort, the widows of high caste in particular are condemned to a life of strict discipline, restraint and self denial. Possibly, it is intended to be a fitting retribution for the escape from the funeral pyre along with her dead husband. They are asked to lead a very strict life so that they will be able to control the physical passion and thus enforce a chaste life. The Hindu tradition upholds chastity for women to be the highest ideal and indeed almost the only virtue in life. The Hindu widows are expected to be preserving the lamp of chastity through every possible care and precaution. Morality, chastity and conduct are the three important pillars of the Hindu society. The edifice of Hindu society rests on these virtues.

The Hindu widows cannot have male friends. They cannot have any sexual relationship with any other man. Their life on the death of their husband turns into a tree without any leaf. They have lost their lustre for living. They are as pale as the moon of the cold winter night. In fact, she is a social outcast, though she is a Brahmin. She is unfortunate. She has to accept this kind of worthless living because she knows that her life is determined by her fate. She cannot change it now. The sun of her life has gone out with the death of her husband. If she wants to live, she has to accept a life of sympathy or mercy from others in the family or the community.

However, elderly widows like aunts or mother with children enjoy honour and respect in their own home or society at large so long as they stick to the rigid code of conduct and manners. They exercise great authority over the young members of the family and are given special facilities in religious observances like going on pilgrimage. The elderly widows gather around them much love and affection as well as respect, especially from the children. Yet they have a dependent status and enforced austerity throughout. They remain essentially helpless inspite of social prestige and domestic consideration due to the concept of fate to which nobody on earth can bring about any change. "She is a fen of stagnant water." All the Hindus have submitted to the supremacy of fate in their life. What is this fate ?

Hindu Concept of Fate

All men and women are born with their fate written on their foreheads by the hand of God Himself. This destiny is absolute and irrevocable. It embraces five principal attributes, namely :

(i) length of life
(ii) disposition
(iii) intelligence
(iv) worldly condition, and finally,
(v) virtuous or vicious inclinations.

What Brahma has predestined in all these is inevitable and must be strictly endured. The Hindus are fully convinced of this that all adversities and misfortunes are predestined.

"Thus was it written on my forehead."

If they are called upon to sympathize in the trouble of relatives or friends, they never forget to say this consolatory remark : No being can escape that which is written on his forehead. Thus in all cases where a Christian would exclaim with humble resignation, God's will be done, the Hindus say with an equal resignation, what is written on the forehead must be fulfilled. Nobody can change it.

It is also upon this irrevocable destiny that the Hindus lay the faults and crimes committed by them. Such instances are not uncommon in everyday life. Thus, when judges ask criminals what has brought them to commit this crime for what they are convicted, they invariably respond :

"This was written on my forehead. It was not in my power to avoid it."

Each man or woman is also endowed with one of these three qualities, *i.e.*

(i) goodness or truth (*satva*)
(ii) passion (*rajas*)
(iii) ignorance (*tamas*)

Whichever of these qualities has fallen to a man's lot is inherent in his being, and is in conformity with his deeds in previous existence, it influences him in all the actions of his life.

This doctrine of fate or destiny was recognized in the earliest times. It was the subject of speculation among the Greek and Roman philosophers. They have also accepted the sway of destiny over mankind.

Funeral Ceremony

The funeral ceremony ("*antyest*") is the greatest single important ritual of the Hindus to whom the value of the next world is Higher than that of the present one. Of the huge mass of prescriptions to be found in various texts about ceremonies, "*Udaka Karma*", *Assucha*, *Asthi Sanchayana*, *Shanti Karma* and *Sapinda Karan* are common to the different parts of India among the Hindus.

Cremation or burning of the dead body is the most recognized mode of the disposal of the corpse. It is motivated by a desire to avoid the corpse being purified or devoured by warms. Burial seems to have been common in case of small children usually under three and asectics who do not stand in need of purification.

The preparation for the cremation starts immediately after death according to the Hindu belief. It is essential for the salvation of the soul of the deceased that the corpse should be disposed of as early as possible.

After the usual purificatory ceremonies, like painting of nails, shaving of hair etc., the body is given a cold bath (known as *Abhisinchana* ceremony) and wrapped in a new sheet or suit, the colour of which is different according to the age, sex, position and other circumstances. The corpse of a married woman is dressed in her usual daily robes, sandal wood paste, white clay from the Ganges, jasmine oil mixed with soffron, essence of roses, etc. are used in accordance with the deceased's means.

The funeral procession starts for the cremation ground, usually situated near the river banks and is headed by the chief mourners, the bier (made of sandalwood in the case of the rich) shouldered by four persons and more follow it. A musical band, however, heads the funeral procession of an aged person and conch shells are blown. Relatives and friends follow the corpse bareheaded and barefooted, crying "*Ram Nam Satya Hai*" (His name is true).

The kind of wood used, the sizes of the pyre, the details relating to them are regulated by sacred texts and nothing is left to the whims or imagination of the mourners. Ordinary wood is used for the pyre of a commoner ; while sandal wood is employed by the rich. "Ghee" (clarified butter) is put into the eyes, nostrils, ears, etc. of the deceased before it is set fire to by his nearest relation—eldest son or youngest brother in case of female, and husband in case of wife. When the dead body is laid on the funeral pyre, the eldest son has to place on the body a cowdung cake with burning rice—husk on it. After the pyre is lit, it is fed with ghee, the flames leap up and dance weirdly around the body and fire-wood crackles reminding the mourners standing by about the rattle of Shiva's drum when He dances the dance of death and destruction.

The eldest son addresses the God of Fire before lighting the pyre :

> "Supporter of beings, womb of thee
> World, nourishers of creatures, this
> One (my father) belonging to the
> Changing world is dead. Lead him to heaven."

As these Mantras are chanted, "the spirit of the dead father goes into fire, his breath into wind, his eyes into the sun, his mind into the moon, his ears into the directions of space, his body into the ether, the hair of head into the trees, his blood into water . . . ."

The son recites the Rig Veda hymn :

"Go forth, go forth on these ancient paths on which our fore fathers departed, having left all sins, go home again, and, radiant in body, come together with them."

The mourners will then retire leaving a few professional persons or burners who employ sticks, etc. to help the body to be completely burnt to ashes. The Hindus believe that when a man is dead, he has dissolved into or attained to the five elements of fire, water, earth, air and ether. The only thing left is a handful of ashes and bones. The Hindus consecrate these left over ashes and bones into the confluence of three holy rivers at "Prayag" in Allahabad in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

When the body is completely burnt, the mourners collect the ashes and then pour water down the place. They all take bath and return home chewing leaves of the *neem* tree before entering their homes as a measure of purificatory device.

In fact the time of death determines when the burial is to take place. Traditionally after sun set no dead body is generally cremated in which case, an overnight vigil takes place with a candle (*diya*) and incense burning by the side of the dead body ; while the relatives keep vigil at night praying and chanting the holy Scriptures.

The cremation in big cities may take place at crematorium which is an electrical procedure for the cremation after which (a day later) the ashes are collected by the relatives. This is a speedy and non-cumbersome and cheap method of disposing of dead-body at a cost of Rs. 40/- per person. However, it is an impersonal way of giving funeral to the dead-body. Not everyone may feel comfortable with it. The other is the Hindu traditional way of burning the dead body. In this case, the body is garlanded and laid out on a pile of wood approximately 300/400 kilograms. To these are added around five kilograms of burning materials and three to five kilograms of ghee. These details may vary from commnity to community. Before lighting the pyre, the Hindu Brahmin priest generally addresses the congregation and everyone there, prays for the departed soul. Mid-way through the burning, the eldest son of the deceased person pokes the skull with a stick, manifesting the departure of the soul.

The congregation then disperses and the next few days it meets at the house of the deceased. This organized bereavement may last for a Hindu from 4 to 13 days. The Hindus notify these events in the important dailies.

Among the Muslims, the mourning period is longer—40 days. Christians observe mourning for one year. Among certain Hindu community the mourning family is virtually quarantined. This practice is referred to as "*sutak*" because of which any physical contact and social intercourse is avoided with the bereaved family. In today's pre-occupied world, the tendency is to call off organized mourning as early as possible. This is done by announcing *Chautha* on the fourth day. On the thirteenth day, the "*Kriya*" takes place, when a "*havan*" is performed for the peace of the departed soul. On that day a standard check list of items is donated. In certain communities, this could include gifting a bedding, a bed, utensils, a pair of shoes, an umbrella, clothes and sweets besides a meal is offered to at least thirteen Brahmins. In some communities feeding a cow or a crow is a part of the rituals.

Mourning Observance

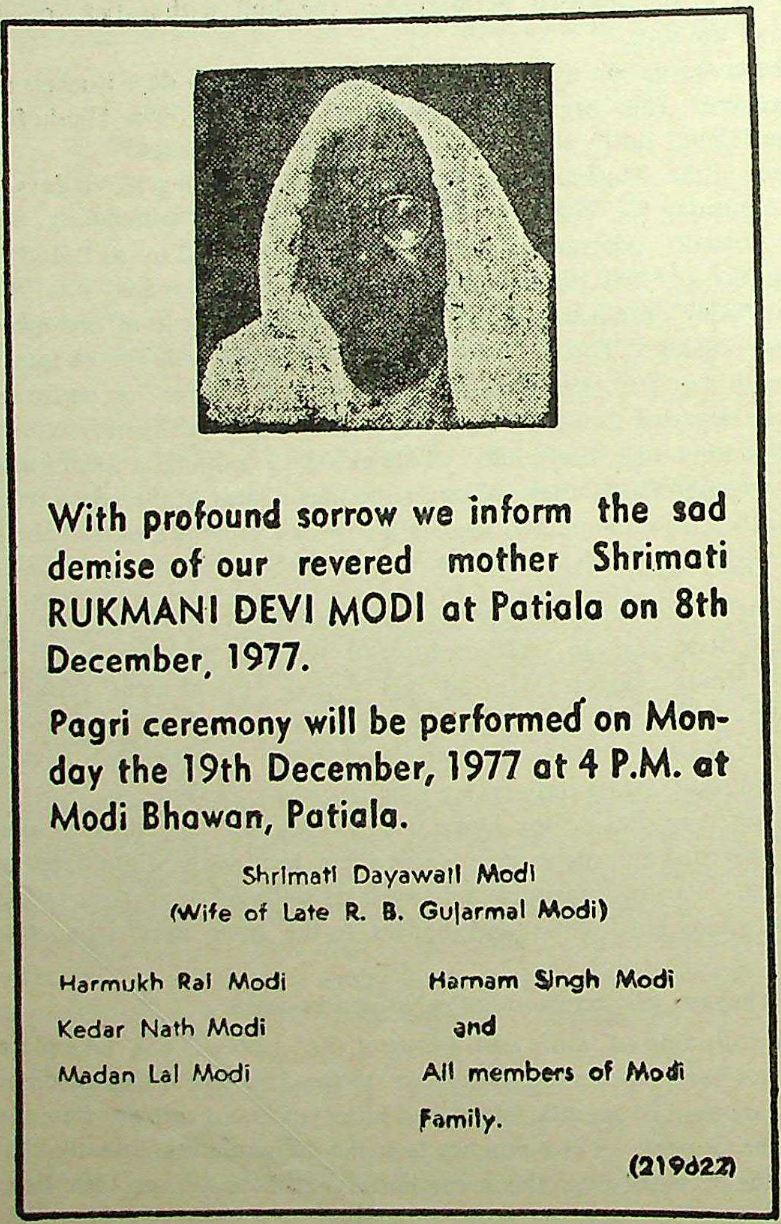
"*Asucha*" (uncleanliness) period varies from one to ten days and even months, according to caste, sex, age, relationship and the circumstances as well as the usages of different Hindu schools. During this period of defilement certain things are prohibited– cutting of hair, beard, study of the Vedas, offerings to deities, etc. The positive rules enjoin the following continence : sleeping on the floor, living on begged or purchased food, eating only in day time, are also observed.

All earthern pots in the house are broken up and thrown away. Gaudy dresses are avoided and the women cover their head with white dopattas as a sign of mourning. Various charitable acts, such as setting free of oxen purchased from the market, giving milch cows and heifers to the poor in charity, etc. are also performed.

Sanchayana (the ceremony of ashes and bones)

The collection of ashes and bones of the deceased will take place with due rites, after an interval varying from four to ten days according to different castes. The bones are washed in milk, deposited in an urn, and thrown into a river, preferably in the Ganges. It is a practice to make daily offerings, usually of rice cooked in milk to the deceased from the cremation day till the 4th or 13th day when the food ceremony of *pitramedha* (*Sapindikaram* or uniting the *preta* with the *pitaras*) is usually performed. Then the soul of the deceased is said to have reached its heavenly abode. Brahmins are fed in honour of the deceased.

Among the Hindus, the eldest son of the deceased is formally designated as the person taking over the responsibility of the householder at the *Kriya* Ceremony. This is also called the "*Pagri*" ceremony.



With profound sorrow we inform the sad demise of our revered mother Shrimati RUKMANI DEVI MODI at Patiala on 8th December, 1977.

Pagri ceremony will be performed on Monday the 19th December, 1977 at 4 P.M. at Modi Bhawan, Patiala.

Shrimati Dayawati Modi
(Wife of Late R. B. Gujarmal Modi)

Harmukh Rai Modi
Kedar Nath Modi
Madan Lal Modi

Harnam Singh Modi
and
All members of Modi Family.

(219622)

PART IV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HINDU CEREMONY AND FESTIVAL

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HINDU CEREMONY AND FESTIVAL

Hindu ceremony and festival are so many. They are very colourful. They are a part of their rich cultural heritage. There is so much of poetry, song, dance, narration and legend in Hindu festivals. They are culturally significant as they are beautifully woven round the individual and the community life of the Hindus without any distinction of caste, class or sex.

There is so much of fragrance and light spontaneously to delight the spirit of the festivals. The spirit of excitement and expectation is pervading. The spirit of jubilation or enjoyment of the Hindu festivals is so contagious that all individuals become an active participant in their commitment to the common goal—fellowship and friendship of universal brotherhood—they are no longer mere spectators or disinterested onlookers. The spirit of Hindu festivals catches on like wild fire spreads rapidly to the neighbours and gradually to the whole community as one family.

Hindu festivals are spectacular and breath taking. That is why all Hindus eagerly await such a solemn moment with all their heart, mind and strength to witness the glory of their Absolute One—the Supreme Almighty.

The entire Hindu community breathes an air of corporate joy, a real happiness of the incense of the festival. Hindu festivals are not meant to be for one individual—the truth, beauty and majesty of Hindu festival simply manifests itself in a union of men and women. A Hindu festival has a definite purpose fulfilled only when it finds out its own perfection through the realization of such a union of heart and thereby bringing in real happiness to all the members of the community. Here emphasis is on happiness and that happiness springs out of love—which is selfless and pure. Thus love stands supreme in the fundamentals of the Hindu festivals :

"This is mine, that is not
So thinks the narrow minded fool,
But to the generous and the lofty
The whole universe is a dear and near one, cool."

This is an indication of their love for one another and through the entire being to the Almighty Eternal God.

The same Upanishadic connotations have so beautifully been reflected in the passages of Rabindra Nath Tagore on Hindu Festivals :

"...That truth, which we forget during our daily life, because of narrow self-interest, has to be admitted on a festive occasion. So, union amongst all is essentially needed during a festival. A festival never belongs to one alone. As a matter of fact, so long as we see all the objects around us as separate parts only and so naturally different from each other, we fail to see this truth. But the moment, we are able to combine all the parts into one 'Universal whole', we realize the truth and that realization alone brings us real happiness or bliss."

This passage of Tagore rendered in English bears the fragrance of the holy incense of the Hindu festivals. The Hindus experience the same glorious delight in the wonderful and melodious rhythem so aptly presented in the Upanishad :

> "Verily, what's vast and great alone is happiness
> There's no happiness in the small and the narrow."

The so called modern political ideal or dream of 'One World' (*Bhuman*) cannot be comprehended without knowing what the Hindu festivals identify—it is an eternal identification with the Absolute Oneness; where oneself in its physical and spiritual existence has discovered the Absolute. The human self has transformed into a divinity and the divine self is manifested during the joy and happiness of the festivals. This is the fundamental message of the Hindu festivals.

Now, one may ask, what's this Absolute Oneness (*Bhuman*) ? It is simply conveyed in the words of the Upanishada :

> Where nothing is seen, nothing is heard;
> Nothing is known—that is *Bhuman* or the
> great and the vast. Where something is
> seen, something is heard, something is
> known—that is small, nor the narrow.
> What's Absolute Oneness (*Bhuman*) is immortal;
> but
> "What is mortal ?"
> "Revered Sir, where is it grounded ?"
> "On His own glory" (*Upanishada* 7 : 2-4)

The Hindu festival is not a one-man affair. It is basically meant to guide men and women into righteousness. The underlying principle of such festive rejoicing is to get rid of narrow-self-centredness or ego-centricism and in its place, to instil in oneself the idea of belongingness to the "Absolute Oneness" in union ithw others forgetting the differences of psychographic or demographic stratifications on such festive occasions. Festivals are moments of rejoicing and merriment and they relieve the Hindus of the humdrum of monotony of a selfish routine-bound world for himself alone.

Hindu festivals are not one man show. It is not a window dressing for an individual's promotional adventure. In fact, all Hindu festivals revolve around a "person". This person or individual may be just a human being or a divine soul. However, he must be intellectually, emotionally or spiritually involved in his commitment to his people. So he must have an intellectual appeal to the Hindus. But above all, he is adorned for his saintly quality or divinity. He is always loved. He is always wanted, because he is very close to the hearts of the people—both men and women. His appearance on the festive scene is an unlimited delight to the Hindus. He speaks the language of His people. He upholds their ideals; He fulfils their aspirations; He moves freely with them; He restores the underlying bond of relationship and fellowship that the Hindus long for—an eternal union with Him—the Absolute One.

So the Hindus in their rememberance of Him majestically light an earthen lamp gloriously they burn incense of sandal-fragrance; triumphantly they blow conch shells for invoking his immortal presence in their midst; reverently they offer flowers; joyfully they sing hymns; devotedly they chant from their holy Spriptures; obediently they seek His blessings for real happiness, peace and joy. But why do they do all those for Him. Because He alone is the existence—Consciousness bliss—"*sat-chit-ananda*".

Festivals are in fact a cultural mirror of the life of the Hindus—their feelings, their sentiments, their beliefs, their aspirations, their values, their art, their dance, their music, their drama, their acts, their involvement. Festivals reveal the heart and its stirrings in their music; festivals manifest the inner urge and its fulfilment. That is why during the festivals, the Hindus let themselves go, play about care-free, express themselves in the art of worship, poetry, song, dance and merriment. They simply enjoy their life in its entirety, its variety, its intensity, its vitality at varied moods and temperaments of happiness and joy by their cultural tone and quality.

Hindu festivals are mainly based on the seasonal fluctuations as well as religious mythology or legends. The Hindu festivals have the purificatory influence over the mind, body and soul. Some festivals are noted for austerity and religious observances; while others are conspicious for pageantry; some still combine both. Further some festivals are celebrated in their houses, some in temples and others in both. All the festivals and their particular days on which they are celebrated are listed in the Hindu Almanac. No other community in this whole world rejoices in a longer list of festivals (Utsava) and seasons of rejoicing well qualified by the observance of fasts (*Upavasa-vrata*), vigils (*jaga-ranas*).

Most of these fasts (*Upavasa-vratas*) and festivals are fixed to take place on certain lunar days (*tithi*), each lumination or period of rather more than twentyseven solar days being divided into thirty of these lunar days; fifteen of which during the waxing of the moon constitute the light half of the month *suklapksha.*) and the other fifteen the dark half *Krishna paksha* Some (festivals, however, are regulated by the motion of the earth around the sun.

It would be difficult, as it seems, for any foreigner to capture the mood of the Hindu festivals because they are so many, so colourful, so rich, so varied, so meaningful and so very significant, joyous, elevating well as artistic, poetic and aesthetic.

These festivals are primarily God-centered and at times people-centered and season-centered—obliterating all considerations of caste, class or sex. They also reinforce unity, purity, wisdom and divine inspiration. However, one can really capture this variegated moods of the Hindus during their festivals. Hindu festivals are linked up with heroic and inspiring deeds of legendary, mythological, historical and national personalities. They have uplifted even the ordinary Hindus with a silken bond of love and loyalty, lofty ideas and values as exemplified by those heroic souls or personified in their heroic evidences through their noble and benevolent deeds over the centuries. In many ways Hindu festivals are the flesh and blood in the anatomy of the Hindu culture.

Origin of Hindu Festivals

The Hindu festivals have originated far back into antiquity. The Vedas are associated in the popular mind with solemn prayers and elaborate sacrifices. In that sense the Hindu festivals are religious in nature.

The idea about the full implications and procedures of the Hindu festivals are obtained from the Puranas (the Hindu Scriptures of the 4th century A.D.).

In different festivals, of course, different rituals are performed. In spirit, they are all religious and not secular in character. The Hindu festivals have been defined as "an activity through which gaiety is engendered. Manu in his *Smriti* describes the procedures of the Hindu festivals as a propitiatory ceremony with gifts of ornaments, garments, foods, etc. to the needy and also to the deserving Brahmins. However, Hindu festivals seem to date back to pre-historic times. Man is not just an animal. He is a social being. He is rational too. Being gregarious, the Hindus have tried to socialise their festivals.

Even in modern times, the Hindu festivals are of various types such as religious, social and seasonal, apart from those in which sports exhibiting valour and determination play a dominant role.

In content, the Hindu festivals are of standard types :

(i) Worship of Gods and Goddess of religious significance,
(ii) celebration of mythological events of lofty ideals,
(iii) expression of hope for the well-being and welfare of friends and relations,
(iv) reflections of economic, social and seasonal life of the community—a thanks-giving to His county and rich harvest.

All Hindu festivals are symbolic rituals, yet Hindu society and religion are inseparable. The English word, "festival" is related to the word "feast". Both are related to Latin words, meaning solemnity, joy and a holiday. It is interesting to notice that "festival" (*Utsava*) in Sanskrit means "to cause to go upwards." It qualifies "enterprise" in the Vedas and later it signifies "joy" and "festivity."

The festivals are considered earlier than legends, stories, rituals. They have been from the time immemorial linked up with religion. And festivals are performed for the sake of attaining one or more objectives such as propitiation of the divine for blessings and boon, expiation of offence, making of offerings in expectation of grant of favours and thanks-givings for His bounties and rich harvest.

Festivals are Mixtures of Feasts and Fasts

The religious link of the festivals has led to the association of different kinds of religious rituals. Religious rituals involve offerings to the divine deity and prayers to God. They entail also purificatory fasts and vigils devo ted to meditation. Thus festivals have become a curious mixtures of fasts and feasts as they constitute the "core" of the Hindu festivals. Fasts are for "self-denial" which is the motive force of Hindu realization of "inner self." Thus fasts constitute "helping oneself to the maximum." Both fasts and feasts have been invented with a spiritual overtone of cleansing oneself from the effect of impurities of the body, mind and soul.

Fasts in the surroundings of gaiety develop into festivals. Of course, it depends on the rituality so as to celebrate seasonal, religious or social occasions and to provide a meaningful cohesiveness to an individual and his community.

The Hindu "holidays" simply means a religious festival which relieves an individual and his family from the obligations of routine bound duty. The Hindus observe round the year a large number of holidays for the sake of festivals.

However, the observance of fasts and feasts are spread over all the months of the year. They are intended to serve as occasions for intensive meditation and prayer of God. Fasts provide an opportunity to the Hindus to look at himself inwardly and search his own soul for his identity in relation to the Absolute Oneness. But they also provide an occasion for joy and thanks-giving. Each one of these festivals commemorates the glory of God and the victory of virtue over vice, good over evil, truth over untruth, righteousness over unrighteousness, light over darkness, wisdom over ignorance, happiness over sorrow, morality over immorality.

Symbolically, these festivals mean the overcoming of all that is "bas" or "animal" in man by the holy power of the Absolute One. What is the significance of fasts ? Since time immemorial, fasts are considered to be the supreme panacea for all evils of the body, mind and soul. Even the Gods and Goddesses had to resort to fastings in order to regain ther lost glory or to get rid of a curse from a saint. The religious fasts are known as "*vrata*". "*Vrata*" is a combination of fast and meditation of God. According to a legend, the great saint, Durvasa got a sacred garland from a woman who had been given this sacred garland as a gift by Goddess of Wealth (Lakshmi) whom this woman had pleased with her melodious voice.

The great saint in return presented that valuable garland to the King of Kings, Indra, while he was leading a procession. But Indra threw that sacred garland on the head of his elephant with bad temper and indignation towards the saint. And the elephant on which Indra was riding pulled that garland and crushed it under its feet. It was an insult to the saint who cursed Indra that his spouse, Goddess of Wealth (Lakshmi) would abandon his kingdom and disappear into the "milky ocean."

As a result of this curse of the great saint all other Gods and Goddesses lost their glory and power. So there was no beauty, no glory, no wealth, no power and no authority in heaven. Rependant Indra for the consequences of his foolish act of dishonouring the saint approached the Lord of compassion (Vishnu) for the return of the Goddess of Wealth (Lakshmi) and her restoration to his kingdom again. As advised by Lord Vishnu all the Gods and demons got together and fasted on the eleventh day (*Ekadashi*) of the new moon and prayed together keeping the vigil for the whole night and as a result on the twelfth day (*Dawadashi*), the Goddess of Wealth appeared before them and she blessed them all. Since then it has become a practice among high caste Hindus to observe the *Ekadashi* of each month as the day of fasting and meditation for a grant of grace and mercy of the Lord of Compassion (Vishnu).

In one of such *Ekadashi* days in autumn Lord Krishna preached the *Bhagawad Gita* to Arjuna on the battle field of Kurushektra in North India. It was on this day again Indra was hubled by Lord Krishna who lifted the Govardhan Mount on his finger tip and held it as an umbrella to protect his devotees from the deluge caused by the fury of Indra (God of storm and thunder) with a plan to punish the devotees of Lord Krishna as they refused to accept Indra in place of Lord Krishna. This day of fasting and meditation for the glory of Lord Krishna brings material prosperity and spiritual advancement and maturity. Fasting on this day is practised by the Hindus not as penitentual exercise but as a means of accumulating religious merit.

Moreover, severe self-mortification is always connected with the fancied attainment of extra-ordinary sanctity or super-human powers. Amongst other objects aimed at is the acquirement of a kind of perfect natural or etheral lightness of body. By long fasting, a man is believed to achieve what is called "*Laghima*", that is to say, his frame becomes so buoyant and sublimated by abstinence that the force of gratification loses its power of binding him to the earth, and he is able to sit or float in the air.

In the present day too, every religious Hindu fasts twice in every lunar month—that is, on the eleventh day (*Ekadashi*) in each fortnight. These fasts are usually very strictly observed, and fruits and milk are allowed. All *Saivas* (worshippers of Lord Shiva) usually fast invariably once a year on the "Shivaratri" (thirteenth) and the fourteenth day (Shivaratri day) of the spring month. Some again fast in honour of Genesh on the fourth lunar day (*Chaturthi*) once a year. In general, in honour of God and goddess the Hindus fast religiously on an auspicious day for the fulfilment of their aspirations in life.

Mahatma Gandhi introduced fast in political life of India to gain support of the people for his cause of liberation of India from the bondage of the British Colonialism and oppression.

Conclusion

A Hindu festival is a humble, yet a confident endeavour to enjoy and rejoice in happiness—a happiness which the Upanishads have so much glorified in their melodious voice, music and hymns. However, a festival may be intensely personal or emotionally universal. But this happiness that the Hindus derive out of their festivals is not simply called "pleasure". "Pleasure" is relative; whereas "happiness" is absolute. Pleasure is limited to individual's limited to individual's resources at his disposal. This kind of pleasure may bring gratification mementarily. It is a passing lightening. Some pleasure of an individual is derived from the deprivation or exploitation of another. The pleasure of a capitalist is like that of a rapist who will bring misery to the helpless; pleasure of the rich robs and deprives the poor of their legitimate right of equal opportunity. The Hindus are not seeking this kind of pleasure which is ephemeral. The Hindus seek happiness through their fastivals. They do not long for pleasure. Happiness to the Hindus is "*Ananda*" (bliss). This happiness is more in giving rather than receiving or accumulating. It is a happiness of sharing. This can be better understood in the Biblibal connotation :

> "For God so loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it." (John 3 : 16-17 : *The Living Bible*).

This happiness of giving knows no conflict or personal gains.

The Hindu festivals turn the whole community life into a dream land of ecstasy. This joy is not external. It is a joy within oneself—the inner unity of heart, soul and mind. It is a realignment of body with soul—mortal with immortal, intransient with transient. These festivals are of short duration but they are just exciting and invigorating. The whole community becomes dear through the festivals of expression, concern and love. It is essentially warm and spiritually redeeming.

Here the Hindus enjoy the vitality of their life-a joy of living with a blessed hope for eternal life when it rests in the Absolute Oneness after completion of the cycle of life after life. Thus the Hindu festivals are a bond of unity for all the Hindus who come together in oneness under the same canopy, same blue sky, in the open green expanse for the same cycle of jubilation and ecstasy. They are all one in their heart. Heart touches heart, joy delights soul, mind reciprocates mind, gratitude encompasses the whole personality of the Hindus.

"It is nothing but a heinous sacrilege to assert that the divine embodies Himself in a human form and comes down to earth to face a challenges—sins and sorrows of the world. It is an embodiment of infinite grace of the All Mighty and all pervading Being in our midst." But why ?

> "Whenever religion becomes corrupt
> And irreligious rises on earth,
> I come to embody myself a-new
> And take a human birth.
> For protecting well the good and the pure ;
> And for destroying the wicked and fain,
> For establishing religion on a firm footing
> I am born again and again
>
> (*Gita* 4 : 7-8)

And it is said such a God who has assured the Hindus in a female voice again in Sri Sri Chandı :

> "Whenever there arise on earth
> Demonic oppression great
> I am born again and again
> To kill the enemies straight."
>
> (*Sri Sri Chandi* 11:35)

Hence the Hindu festivals are by nature religious. It revolves around the divinity of God. Yet there is an intimate relationship and fellowship between the worshippers and their worshipped.

The principal festivals of the Hindus are *Diwali* or *Deepavali*, *Navaratri* (festivals of nine light), *Durga Puja* (*Dassera*), *Holi*, *Shivaratri*, *Ramnavami*, *Janmastami*, *Ganesh Puja* etc. Some are associated with the heroes of the great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the great heroic characters—Rama and Krishna who are accepted as the incarnations of God. Shiva is the Lord of all Lords.

In all these festivals, the underlying meaning is that of virtue, which is victorious over the vice, good triumphs over evil. It is equally an admiration and enthusiasm in a colourful, jubilant and joyous way. It pervades the nation on a human level. It imbibes the minds of the millions of the Hindus with the love of the ideal, the reverence for virtue and admiration for the good. These festivals implant in the heart of the Hindus the seed of the art of worship for the ideal : the good, the true, the victorious including them to the practice of virtue and avoidance of evils.

The Hindu festival thus has become a process of nation building through national education in lofty values, high standards of conduct and behaviour, cultivating refined tastes and raising the cultural level of the Hindus in their greater realization of their being as part of the Absolute Oneness.

In short, the Hindu festivals are not only educative but also cohesive, cementing and integrating, making the Hindus more aware of the virtues and values of their ancient heritage by adopting, and imbibing for their national growth, glory and unity in the diversity of panoramic beauty, poetry, philosophy, music dance and art of the festivals.

The Hindu festivals form an integral part of their life and have helped to preserve the tradition and culture of the Hindus. If one were to name two pillars of Hindu Culture, one which it rests and which have been its main stay and which have stood the onslaught of time, invasion and social upheavals, they are firstly the Hindu festivals and ceremony and secondly the Hindu woman-hood.

A study of Hindu ceremony and festivals is not merely fascinating and informative, but is revealing regarding the Hindu art of living and way of life, of its relationship to the Absolute. It explains the catholicity of Hindu religion and approach to other faiths, its ability to absorb outside influences without losing its own character, colour and distinctiveness, its tradition and its deep rooted respect for spirituality. It has this strength which has sustained it all these years.

PART V

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Swamy Anand : *Path of Saints—As the Fulfilment of Vedanta* : S. Ramakrishna, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.
2. Sri Aurobindo : *The Foundations of Indian Culture* : The Sri Aurobindo Library Inc. New York, 1953.
3. Swami Abhedananda : *The Sayings of Shri Ramkrishna* : The Vedanta Society, New York, 1903.
4. Dr. Paul Brunton : *The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga* : Hutchinson Publishing Group Ltd.. Fitzroy Square, *London.*
5. Maharshi Suddhananda Bharati : *Secrets of Samayoga* : Suddhananda Library, Yoga Samaj, Madras, Thmil Nadu.
6. Haridas Bhattacharyaya : *The Cultural Heritage of India* : The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1956.
7. Beni Prasad : *The State of Ancient India* : Indian Press, Allahabad, 1928.
8. A.L. Basham : *The wonder that was India* : Sidewick and Jackson, London, 1954.
9. L.D. Barnett : Paramarthasara of Abhinavagupta with Yogaraja's Commentary : Translated in *journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain*, 1970.
10. J.N. Banerjee : *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta University, 1956, Calcutta.
11. A Barth : *Religions of India*, Translated by J. Wood : Kegan Paul Trend, Trubnere Co. London, 1921.
12. G. Buhler : *The Laws of Manu* : Sacred Books of the East, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1886.
13. Hubert Bewit : *The Supreme Doctrine* : Pantheon Books, New York, 1955.
14. *The cultural Heritage of India* Vol. I : The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta.

15. Pran Chopra : *Some Aspects of Social Life During the Mughal Age (1526-1707)* : Shiva Lal Agarwala & Company (P) Ltd. Publishers Agra, U.P. 1963.
16. Pran Chopra : *Customs, Rites And Ceremonies* : Shiva Lal Agarwala & Co. (P) Ltd., Publishers, Agra, U.P.
17. Dr. Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya : *Social Life in Ancient India* : Academic Publishers, Calcutta, 1965.
18. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee : *Indian Culture* : A Universal Publication, Delhi.
19. Dr. (Mrs.) Usha Chakravarty : *Condition of Bengali Women Around the 2nd Half of the 19th Century* : Bardhan Press, Calcutta, 1963.
20. J.C. Chatterjee : *Kashmir Shaivism* : The Research Deptt. Kashmir State, Srinagar, 1914.
21. S.C. Chatterjee : *The Fundamentals of Hinduism* : A Philosophical Study : Dasgupta & Co., Calcutta, 1950.
22. Will Durant : *The Story of Civilization* Vol. I (Copyright 1935 by Will Durant—Reprinted by permission of Simon and Schuster.
23. Dr. Surendra Nath Das Gupta : *A History of Indian Philosophy* Vol. I & V: The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta.
24. The Abbe J.A. Dubois : *Description of the Character, Manners & Customs of the People of India* : Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, Paternoster—Row (1817), London.
25. Bhagavan Das : *Science of Social Organisation or the Laws of Manu in the light of Atmavidya* (3) Vols : Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras.
26. P.S. Desmukh : *The Origin and Development of Religion in Vedic Literature* : Oxford University Press, London, 1933.
27. N.K. Deveraja : *Hinduism and the Modern Age* : Current Book House, Bombay (1975).
28. Romesh C. Dutta : *Early Hindu Civilization* : R.P. Mitra & Sons, Calcutta, 1927.
29. Paul Deussen : *The philosophy of the Upanishads* : Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1908.
30. Richard Frick : *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddhist's Time* : University of Calcutta, 1920.
31. Louis Fischer : *Gandhi His Life and Message for the World* (Paper back edition) by New American Library, New York.
32. Dr. V.S. Ghate : *The Vedanta—A study of the Brahmasutras with the Bhaishyas* : Dr. R.N. Dandekar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona-4.

33. Theodore Goldtucker : *Inspired Writings of Hinduism* : Susil Gupta (India) Ltd., Calcutta, 1952.
34. Giriraj Gupta : *Family and Social Changes in India* : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi (1976).
35. M.K. Gandhi : *My Varnashrama Dharma* : ED Anand T. Hingorani, Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963.
36. H. Haig : *Leading Ideals of Hinduism* : Susil Gupta (India) Ltd., Calcutta, 1952.
37. C. V. Narayana Iyer : *The Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India*, Calcutta, 1923.
38. Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda : *Bhagavadgita*, Herper & Bros., New York (1944-51).
39. *Vedanta for the Western World* : Vedanta Press, Hollywood, 1952.
40. Christopher Isherwood : *Vedanta for Modern man*, Harper & Bros., New York, 1951.
41. J. Jolly : *Hindu Law and Customs*, Tr. By B. K. Ghosh : Greater India Society, Calcutta, 1928.
42. Young Kimball : *Social Psychology*, 3rd edition : Crafts, New York, 1956.
43. Mr. K.M. Kapadia : *Marriage and Family in India* : Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1958.
44. Shree Kumar Swamiji : *The Vivasaiva Philosophy and Mysitcism*, V.R. Koppal Dharwar, 1949.
45. A.P. Karmarkar : *Religions of India*, Mira Publishing House, Lonavla, 1950.
46. R.S. Khare : *Hindu Rites of Food* : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi (1977).
47. Laidecker : *Pratyabhijnahrdaya* (The Secret of Recognition) : Tr. with Notes : The Adyar Library, Madras, 1938.
48. Dr. T.M. Mahadevan : *Outlines of Hinduism* : S. Dikshit, Chetna Ltd., Fort, Bombay.
49. Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan : *Preceptors of Advaita* : Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mandir, Secunderabad.
50. O'Molley : *Modern India and the West : A study of the interaction of their civilization*, Oxford University Press, London, 1941.
51. O'Molley : *Indian Caste, Customs*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1932.
52. O'Molley : *India's Social Heritage* ; Oxford University Press, London, 1934.
53. K. Motwani : *Manu : A Study in Hindu Social Theory* : Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1937.

54. Radhakumud Mookherjee : *Ancient Indian Education*, Macmillian, 1947.
55. Radhakumud Mookerjee : *Nationalism in Hiudu Culture* : Theos. Pub. House, London, 1921.
56. Max Muller : *India What Can It Teach Us* : Longman, London, 1910
57. A.A. Macdonell : *Vedic Mythology* : V. Von K.J. Trubner, Strassburry, 1897.
58. J. Marshall : *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization* : Arthur Probsthain, London, 1931.
59. K.W. Morgan, Ed. : *The Religion of the Hindus* Ronald Press, New York, 1953.
60. S.C. Nandimath : *Hand Book of Virashaivism* : Ed. by Literary Committee I.E. Association, Dharwar, 1942.
61. Swami Nirvedananda : *Hinduism at a Glance* : Vidyamandira, Bengal : S. Mondal, 1946.
62. Swami Nikhilanand : *The Essence of Hinduism* : Beacon Press, Boston, 1948.
63. Swami Nikhilananda : *The Upanishads* : Harper & Bros., New York, 1949, 1952, 1956.
64. John Campbell Oman : *The Great Indian Epics* : National Publishing House, New Delhi.
65. Sitanath Pradhan : *Chronology of Ancient India* : Calcutta University, 1927.
66. R. Paul : *The Hindu Philosophy of Land in Vedic and Post Vedic Times* : Bishvabhandar Press, Calcutta.
67. D.A. Pai : *Monograph on the Religious Sects in India Among the Hindus*: Times of India Press, Bombay, 1928.
68. K.M. Panikkar : *The Foundation of New India* : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1963.
69. Swami Prabhananda : *Vedic Religion and Philosophy* : Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-4.
70. Max Webber : *The Religion of India* : The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, U.S.A.
71. K.C. Pandey & Abinava Gupta : *An Historical and Philosophical Study* : Chouk Koma Sanskrit Series Office, Banaras, 1936.
72. S.D. Pawati : *Virashaiva Philosophy of the Shaivagamas* : W.B. Bile Angadi.
73. J.M. Nallaswami Pillai : *Sivasnana—Bodham* : Tr. with Notes and introduction : Dharmapuram Adhiram, 1945, 1948.
74. Pandharinath H. Prabhu : *Hindu Social Organisation* : Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1940.
75. Sita Nath Pradhan : *Chronology of Ancient India* : Calcutta University, 1927.

76. K.M. Pannikar : *Hinduism and the Modern World* : Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1938.
77. Dr. Ruth Reyna : *Introduction to Indian Philosophy* : Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi.
78. Prof. M. Rangacharya : *The Hindu Philosophy of Conduct* : The Educational Publishing Co., Madras.
79. Romain Rolland : *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* : Advaita Ashram, Calcutta.
80. Romain Rolland : *The Life of Ramakrishna* : Vedanta Press, Hollywood.
81. R.V. Russell : *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, 4 Vols., Introductory Essay on Castes in Vol. I, Macmillan, London, 1916.
82. H.H. Risley : *The People of India* : Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, Bank Publishers, Delhi, 1915.
83. H.G. Rawlinson : *A Short Cultural History*—Praeger, N.Y., 1962.
84. E.J. Rapson : *Ancient India*, from the Elizabeth Times to the First Century A.D. : Cambridge Univesity Press, 1914.
85. Rao and Hayavadana : *Indian caste System : A Study* : Bangalore City Press, 1931.
86. R.D. Ranade : *A Conservative Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*– Oriental Book Agancy, Poona, 1926.
87. S. Radhakrishnan : *The Heart of Hinduism* : Allen & Unwin, London, 1932.
88. S. Radhakrishnan : *An Idealistic view of Life* : Allen & Unwin, London, 1932.
89. S. Radhakrishnan : *The Hindu View of Life* : Allen & Unwin, London, 1927.
90. S. Radhakrishnan : *Indian Philosophy* Vol. I & II : Allen & Unwin, London, 1927.
91. Dr. D.P. Singhal : *India and World Civilzation*, Vol. II, Rupa & Co., New Delhi.
92. S. Kuppuswamy Sastri : *The Primer of Indian Logic* : The Kuppuswamy Sastri Research Institute, Mylapore, Madras.
93. K.L. Sharma : *The Changing Rural Stratification* : Orient Longman Ltd., 1974, New Delhi.
94. W.G. Summer : *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* : Yale University Press, 1925.
95. Percival Spear : *India, Pakistan and the West* : Oxford University Press, New York, 1952.
96. J.N. Samaddar : *The Glories of Magadha*, 2nd Ed. Arthur, Patno, India, 1927.

97. Dr. Donald Eugene Smith : *India As a Secular State* : Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jerssey, 1963.
98. Swami Swaruppananda : *Srimad Bhagawad Gita* : Advaita Ashram, Mayavati, Himalayas, 1933.
99. I.E. Thurston & K. Rangachari : *Tribes and Castes of South India* : Longman, Madras, 1929.
100. N.A. Thoothi : *The Vaishnavas of Gujarat* : Longman, London and Bombay, 1935.
101. W.S. Taylor : *Basic Pensonality in Orthodox Hindu Culture Patterns* : J. Abn. & Soc. Psych 43 (1948).
102. E.J. Urwick :*The Message of Plato* : Methuen, London, 1920.
103. Dr. Vatsyayan : *Indian Philosophy* : Kedernath Ramnath Publishers, Meerut, U.P.
104. Swami Vivekananda : *Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga and Bhakti Yoga* : Advaita Ashram, Calcutta.
105. S.V. Venkateswara : *Indian Culture Through the Ages* : Longmen Green & Co., Madras, 1928.
106. Swami Vivekananda : *The Complate Works of Swami Vivekanand* : Calcutta Advaita Ashram, 1970.
107. J.M. William : *Principles of Social Psychology* : Knopf, New York, 1920.
108. E. Westermarkk : *History of Human Marriage*, 3 Vol., 5th Edn. Macmillan, London, 1924.
109. M. Monier Williams : *Hinduism* : Susil Gupta (India) Ltd. Calcutta, 1951.
110. The Wishing tree : *Vedanda for the Western World* : Marcel Rodd Co. Hollywood, 1946.
111. Heinrich Zimmer's : *The Philosophies of India* : Pantheon Books New York, 1951.

INDEX

Abbe J.A. Dubois 72
Abhisinchana 185
Abraham 178
Absolute one 191
Absolute oneness 192
Adharma 39, 47, 65
Adi-shakti 11
Adivasis 115
Adler 50
Adonais 57
Advaita 58
Aesthetic instinct 61
Agama veda 58
Agnate 163
Agni 16, 176
Agni-God 159, 164
Agnishraltas 145
Ahankara 42
Aitaraya 44
Akradha 104
A.L. Basham 61
Aldous Huxley 50
Alexandria 16
A.L. Kroeber 85
Allahabad 186
Almanac 147, 148, 168
Almighty Eternal God 192
A.N. Roy, Chief Justice 134
Alpha 3, 99
Amba 58
Ambedkar 114
Ambivalent tension 48
Amen 5, 8
America 148
Americans 47
American states 180
America-theosophy 54
Amin 5
Amophous entity 109
Amrita 146
Anabolic process 21
Ananda 24
Anand T. Hingorani 117
Anamtayamani 31
Angiravas 145
Anima 82
Anna-prasana 152
Anthropology 85
Anti-thetical 48
Antyest 185
Appu 12
Aptya Bhava 23
Aranyakas 14, 15, 17
Arati 152
Argha 157
Arjuna 21, 23, 31, 105
Arranged Marriage 167
Artha 97, 104, 161, 170, 176
Arnold J. Toynbee 40
Arthur schopenhauer 52
Arup 9
Aryan 13, 25, 111, 119
Aryan scripts 14
Asana 19
Ashi sanchayana 185
Ashram 15
Ashramas 111
Ashta siddhis 82
Ashramas 89
Assueha 185
Astral Body 101
Astral space 101
Astronomial Almanac 147
Astyam 104
Asucha 187
Atma 64
Atman 5, 18
Athrva veda 4, 13, 91

Atheist 6
Atma-jnan 64
Atomic age 67
Atman 32
Atri 124
Atrind 90
Aum 5, 6
Aurobindo's 66
Aurobindo 116
Austria 181
Austrichs 69
Autonomons 93
Avatar 66, 84
Avidya 20

Balavana 151
Baptism 136
Barhishadar 145
Being-consciousness-Bliss 28
Belgium 179, 181
Bertrand Russel 50
Beta 99
Bhadra 146
Bhagavda Gita 21, 26, 27, 30, 53, 55, 60, 61, 97, 105, 106, 110, 118, 121
Bhagavata Puranas 110
Bhagawan Das 49
Bhakti-marga 28
Bhakti Movement 37
Bhakti yoga 27, 28
Bharadwaja 124
Bhavabhuti 176
Bhuman 192
Bhuta Yagna 106
Bible 3, 58, 59, 73, 117
Bioplasma 81
Bishop Caldwell 72
B.K. Ghosh 144
Body social 126
Born-again 74
Brahmacharrya 91, 155
Brahma 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, 38, 69, 124, 127, 155
Brahmachari 90
Brahmalok 145
Brahman 14, 19, 21, 40, 44, 57, 64, 77, 78
Brahmacharya ashram 89
Brahmin 9, 20, 76, 84, 91, 92, 97, 116, 118, 121, 126, 128, 130, 132, 146, 148, 149, 152, 154, 157, 179, 188
Brahmin astrologer 154
Brahmin priest 158
Brahmothara-kanda 8
B.R. Ambedkar 137
Break down 180
Brahadaranyaka upanishads 20, 61
British census 76
British suzerainty 121
Brother-in-law 174
Brother Lawrence 29
Bucke 36
Budha 6, 99
Budhi 76, 109
Budha-hood 103
Budhi 22
Budhists 7, 14
Butler 36
Byron 56

Canada 179, 180, 182
Canons 7
Cardinal directions 147
Carrot 45
Caste system 119
Catholicism 58
Cause-effect-chain 98
Casual plane 101
Catholic missionaries 135
Chandalas 97
Cecrops 120
Chaitara 10
Chasm 51
Chatur Varna 111
Chautha 187
Chicago 53
Chicago parliament of Religion 45
Chitta 81
Christ 55
Christian era 175
Christian faith 134, 136
Christianity 52, 54, 61, 62, 68, 73, 137
Christians 5, 6, 16, 70, 75, 115, 132, 187
Christian missionaries 74
Chronological polygamy 180
Churakama 153
Church 116
Church pulpit 75
City states 51
Class or caste 151
Coleridge 57
Comte 32

Concubine 74, 182
Conglomerate 18
Consent 180
Consercration 158
Cosmic Justice 107
Cosmological 31
Cosmos 99, 101
Courtship 172
C. Rajagopalachari 29, 69, 141
Cramb 49
Crocodiles 26
Crucifixion 6
Cupid's Romance 167

Daily pranayan 157
Dakshinayana 145
Das 151
Dasarha 8
Daughter-in-law 173, 174
Daya Bhava 23
Deep-sleep 100
Deity 6
Denmark 179
Desideratum 42
Deussen 39, 49, 58, 59
Devara 174
Devas 17
Deva-yajna 105
Devayana 145
Devi 23
Dharma 39, 47, 65, 94, 97, 104, 109, 143, 153, 160, 161, 170, 176, 177
Dharma-sastras 165
Dharamshalas 106
Dhana 151
Dhi 104
Dhoti 170
Dhriti 104
Dhyana 81
Diksha 158
Dilettante 37
Dina 151
District Magistrate 136
Divine Communication 36
Divine Reality 37
Divine tranquility 83
Diya 186
Donald Harrington 55
Double-dose 165
Dowry 169
D P. Singhal 52
Dualist 6
Durba 145
Durbha Ashtami 146
Durbha grass 146
Durga 6
Dwija 124

Eastern faith 54
Eclipse 107
Economic pyramid 112
Ego 77
Ego-centric 48
Egoism 22, 35
Egyptians 121
Ekadashi 183
Elder-brother-in-law 174
Electro-magnetic field 99
Elegy 57
Emerson 53, 55
E.M.S. Namboodiripad 115
Energy matrix 81
England 179, 180
Epic age 70
Epic stories 94
Epilepsy 166
Esau 133
Esoteric doctrine 17
Eternal truth 52
Ethical precepts 94
Ethic of Jesus 55
Ethno-centric projections 49
Europe 46, 50, 148
European astisan 121
European missionaries 12
European philosophy 52
Europeans 52
Evangelical 135
Evangelical christian missionaries 75
Evil spirits 106
Evolution 61
E.W. Emersion 53

Family *Guru* 83
Father-in-law 174
Fault 180
Federal Republic of Germany 179, 180, 182
Femabel 16
Fen of stagnent water 184
Finland 179, 180

Fire-God 95, 105, 152, 153, 157, 166
First-waters 13
Flame Divine 32
Foetus 91
Foetus laying ceremony 149
Fossilized ammonite 13
France 179, 181
Freedom of conscience 134
Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, 134
Friedrich Nietzsche 52
French Encyclopedists 50
Freud 50, 94
Full blood 163
Funeral ceremony 185

Gamma 99
Gandaki 13
Gandharvas 38
Gandhi 51, 124
Gandhism Concept 50
Ganges 8, 10, 13, 21, 26, 92, 110, 185
Garden of Eden 159
Garhastha Ashram 89
Gastro-enteritis 84
Gastro-intestinal disturbance 101
Gautama 42, 43, 125
Gautama Budha 95, 103
Gayatri 8, 93, 157
Gayatri Mantra 7, 9, 15
Genus *borage* 146
George Borrow 56
Gerald Heard 128
Ghungat 174
Gibbon 56
Gilchrist 72
Gita 17, 28, 29, 33, 41, 42, 46, 62, 66, 116
Gnats 18
God 78
Goddesses 23
God-*devarina* 105
God of fire 15
Golden egg 13
Gomata 133
Gopala 23
Gospel 3
Gospel of Christ 30, 73, 75
Gotra 164, 165
Graeco-Roman Judaic christianity 55
Greeks 51, 185
Greek culture 53
Greek orthodox church 36
Greek philosopher 51
Greeks 46
Grihastha 158
Gunas 33, 42 121
Gurus 93, 156-158
Guru Nanak 111

Hager 178
Haldi 151
Half-blood 163
Hamsa 166
Hanuman 23
Haridas Bhattacharya 69
Harijans 112, 114, 115, 118, 124, 135, 137
Harmonious group 111
Hatha yoga 78
Havan 154, 187
Hebrew 7
Hem 78
Hemorphoids 166
Hemothism 21
Heritage 61
Hesse 52
Hexagon 6
Hindu Art 60
Hindu Ballad 94
Hindu Baptism 155
Hindu Brahmin 187
Hindu Caste 110, 141
Hindu ceremony 141, 149
Hindu charity 106
Hindu conservatism 60
Hindu convert 136
Hindu culture 52, 60, 70, 104
Hindu custom 141
Hindu *dharma* 104
Hindu family 143
Hindu *Guru* 82
Hindu house holder 93
Hinduism 21, 48, 54, 61, 71, 109, 136, 137
Hindu joint family 144
Hindu legend 124
Hindu literature 60
Hindu marriage 163
Hindu metaphisician 142
Hindu painting 60
Hindu pastor 148

Hindu philosophers 46, 51, 60, 62, 70, 73, 75, 77, 81, 111
Hindu religion 60, 70
Hindus 52
Hindu saints 4
Hindu scriptures 28, 54, 117,
Hindu society 178
Hindu sculpture 60
Hindustan 75
Hindu teacher 93
Hindu thought 56
Hindu-theistic religion 69
Hindu theology 53
Hindu trinity 10
Hindu vision 56
Hippies 48
Hirayanagarbha 13
Holy spirit 6
Homer 18
Horoscopes 168
House hold deity 95
House-holder 94
Hridaya 175
Human Seed 91
Humayun Kabir 119
Hume 50
Huxley 50
Hypertension 84

Ichchha 78
Idolizing people 50
Ill assorted creeds 68
Illusion 58
Indciyanigraha 104
Indian civilization 51
Indian constitution 117
Indian heritage 56
Indian philosopher 151
Indian socio-political life 115
Indra 15, 16, 176
Indus valley civilization 110
I ness 28
Infinite one 52
Intelect 77
Intellectual discernment 52
International Labour Organisation 181
International Social Security Association 180
Intra-penetrating 99
Ionized air 81
Ishrain 18
Isitwa 82
Islam 61
Islamic culture 71
ISSA 181, 182

Jacob 133
Jagatmata 58, 169
Jagad-Amba 59
Jagadguru Sri Chandra Sekharendra Saraswati 41
Jagjivan Ram 114
Jainism 7
Jamadagni 125
Janata Party 122
Jnana Yoga 27
Jata-karma 150
Jati 111
Jaymala 169
J.B. Pratt 70
Jean-Jacques Ampere 52
Jehovah 7
Jeneva 181
Jesus 6, 41
Jesus Christ 30, 56, 73
Jewish 46
Jimmi Carter 55
J.M. William 158
Jnana 78
Jnanakanda 14
Jnana marg 28
Jnana-yoga 26, 27
John Thirlwell 57
Jolly 144
Jone's 56
Johann Cottliab Fichte 51
Jung 50
Jyotisam Jyotih 39

Kabir 117
Kailash 10
Kala 145
Kala-kal 145
Kalavati 8
Kalaidoscopic projection 68
Kama 104, 169, 170, 176
Kanaveda 153
Karma 143
Kama 161, 169, 170, 176, 177
Kamaveda 91
Kamasutra 175
Kant 18, 45, 49, 51, 52, 108

Kanta or Madhuva Bhava 23
Kanyadan 169
Karanjala 13
Karma 38-40, 45, 64, 97, 102, 121
Karma kanda 14
Karma-marga 28
Karmaphal 63
Karma-yoga 26-28
Karmaveda 57
Karmic record 101
Kartika 147
Kasyapa 125
Katha 20, 44
Katha Upanishad 16, 19, 20, 42, 58
Kaula Upanishads 58
Kaulikas 58
Keats 57
Kingdom of Heaven 34
Kiratas 69
K.J. Parmar 112
K.M. Panikkar 75, 115, 116, 119
Koestler 36
Koham 67
Koran 3, 117
Krishna 6, 23, 42, 58
Kriya 78, 187, 188
Kshatriyas 20, 97, 118, 121, 124, 126, 128, 130, 151, 156
Kundalini yoga 78
Kunti 97

Laghima 82
Laurels of Newton 56
Law of Deed 57
Law of Karma 98, 100, 101, 108
Law of Manu 178
Laya 22
Leprosy 179, 182
Leviticus 151
Life Divine 36
Lingham 9, 10
Linguistic minorities 122
Living dead 183
Locke 50
Logos "OM" 4
Lok Sabha election 122
Long life 150
Lord Budha 26, 117
Lord God 159
Lord Krishna 30, 97, 105, 110, 121, 133, 147
Lord of death 103
Lord Shiva 110
Lord Vishnu 146, 147
Lord William Bentinck 72
Louis Jacolliot 53
Louis Revel 53
Lunar-fortnight 84
Lao Tse 37

Machiketa 103
Madona 6
Magnetic personality 93, 97, 105, 108, 110, 121, 160
Mahalaya festival 106
Mahapapa 165
Mahaprasthan 90, 96
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 83
Mahatma Gandhi 79, 84, 112, 116, 117
Maheswar 155
Mahima 82
Maitrayi 48, 103
Maitri 20
Maitri Upanishad 17
Male Making Ceremony 149
Mana 175
Manavdharma 49
Manava dharma sastra 65
Manav-sanskrit 49
Mangalam 151
Man, the Master 128
Mantra 7, 14, 51, 148, 150, 157, 186
Manu 65, 76, 90, 95, 97, 106, 126, 129, 149, 155, 161, 166
Manu smiriti 7, 178
Margosa 9
Markendeya 23
Margosa 10
Marriageable Age 161
Martin Luther King 55
Maunam 35
Marxism 50
Materialism 78
Materialistic prosperity 67
Matrimonial alliance 168
Matsyapurana 145
Mauna 35
Mavasayitwa 82
Max Müller 16, 21, 45, 51
Maya 20
Medieval 50

Medio-yoga system 84
Meditation 77
Medha 150
Menon 19
Menstrual period 9
Mentalism 76
Messiah 112
Metaphysical 66
Metaphysical truth 58
Metaphysics 73
Mental body 100
Mental disorders 84
Mental Health 47
Mental peace 83
Metaphysics 142
Meta physical doctrines 94
Meta physical speculations 58
Mine-ness 28
Minorities commission 122
Milni 169
Mlechho 75
Moksha 23, 28, 64, 104, 112, 118, 160, 161, 170, 176
Monasticism 15
Mondualist 6
Monogomy 162, 178
Mongoloids 69
Monk 112
Monkey-God 24
Monoist 6
Morarji Desai 55, 114, 115
Moses 120, 126
Mother-in-law 173
Mystical 36
Mystin 35
Muslims 24, 70, 132
Mulam 161
Mumukshu 37
Mund 39
Mundaka Upanishad 4
Mundane existence 64
Munja grass 155

Nabhih 175
Nachiketa 19, 42, 44, 103
Naipal 50
Nama-karan 151
Namaskaram 147
Namah shivrya 8
Narayan 12, 13, 21, 69
National integration 122
Natural calamities 102
Negative ions 81
Neiveddya 152
Neem 186
Neo-Buddhists 115
Nervous 101
Netherland 179, 180
New Testament 18, 30, 31, 54, 180
Nirguna 18
Nirvana 26
Nishad 17, 69
Nishkarman Ceremony 152
Niyamas 79
Noah 126
Norway 179
Numa pompilins 120
Nri yajna 106

Obeisance 21
Obligatory fasts 84
Occult powers 99
Octagon 6
Ocymum sanctum 146
Odyssey 16
Old Testament 159
Old Testament Law 57
OM 5, 6
Omega 3
Omniscient 5
Omnipotent 5
Omnipresent 5
One being 53
One world 192
Organic democracy 128
Original caste 133
Orthodox 75

Padma 79
Pagri 188
Pancha karyam 125, 133, 134
Panchbutas 22
Pandavas 21
Paramanna 153
Parasu 10
Parliament of Religions 53
Parvati 9
Path of *nivriti* 97
Patterns of culture 85
Paul Deussen, Dr. 49, 52, 57

P.D. Ouspensky 129
Pedagogy 93
Percy Bysshe Shelley 57
Phaedrus 62
Phallus 9
Pheedo 20
Phithisis 166
Physical health 96
Physical phenomena 142
Physical plane 98, 100
Pitaras 188
Pitramedha 188
Pitrilok 145
Pitri-paksha 145
Pitri-rina 105
Pitri-yajna 106
Pitrs 38
Pitryana 145
Plasmic body 81
Platonic text 19
Plato 19, 20, 45, 52, 53, 62
Pleasent speaking wife 94
Political destiny 55
Pollution of touch 111
Prajapati 7, 38
Prajapati Lord 16
Prakriti 22, 25
Prakamya 82
Prana 46, 64, 81
Prana-shakti 80
Pranayama 79, 80
Pranic 80
Prapti 82
Pratyuhara 81
Prayag 186
Prayaschitta 30
Pre-nuptical chastity 160
Preta 188
Primitive fables 54
Primordial sound principle 5
Private 114
Process 61
Prof. Deussen 15
Prof. Northrop 46
Prohibited relationship 163
Prophet 66
Propinquity 167
Prostitute 74
Proslytize 134
Protestantism 58
Prusha 19
Psychiatric 47
Psycho-analysis 94
Psychological disorders 47
Psychological origin 165
Psychometry 101
Psychophysical stretch-methods 83
Psychic 85
Ptri-rina 145
Public sector undertaking 119
Puja 10, 153
Purifactory rite 84
Purohitas 148, 149
Purusha 4
Purusana 149
Purushakta 124
Putra 160
Pythagoras 20

Rabindra Nath Tagore 192
Radha 23, 58
Radhakrishnan 16, 116, 176
Rajas 12, 185
Rajaguna 21
Raksha 151
Ralph Waldo Emerson 53
Rama 23, 24
Ramakrishnan 6, 15
Ramanand 117
Ramanuja 62
Ramayana 110
Ram Nam Satya Hai 185
Ravna 23
Raymond A. Moody Jr. 63
R.C. Majumdar 69
Reddish hair 166
Reincarnation 108
Republic 20
Renaissance 52
Rev. Brahma-bandhu Upadhyaya 30
Richard D. Lyone 47
Rig 7
Rig veda 4, 15, 119, 124, 128, 159, 176
Rig veda hymn 186
Rigveda Samhita 16, 93
Rishi 8, 124, 125
Rishi yajna 106
Roman philosophers 185
Roman Rolland 117
Romans 46

Rudyard Kipling's 36
Russel 36
Ruth Benedict 85

Sacramental 84
Sacred thread 155
Sacrosanct character 69
Sadhana 77, 78
Sakhaya Bhava 23
Sakhi 11
Salagram-shila 12, 13
Salvation 18, 40
Sama 7
Samadht 31
Samadhi 32, 78, 81, 91
Samavartana ceremony 158
Sama veda 4
Same body 164
Sam-kalpa 162
Samskaras 144, 158
Samsara 20
Samuel Taylor Coleridge 56
Sanchayana 187
Sankaracharya 37
Samskaras 76
Sanskrit 73
Sanskrit *shlokas* 155
Santa Bhava 23
Santa-manah 91
Sanatana 70
Sanatan dharma 38
Sapinda 163, 165
Sapinda karan 185, 188
Saptarshi mandal 125
Saree 170
Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan 151
Sashtangam 133
Satapadi 170, 171
Satapatha Brahmana 4
Satchidnanda 28
Satya Guna 22
Satva 12, 185
Satya 104
Satyagraha 124
Satyam 92
Satyam Sivam Sundaram 11
Savitr (Sun-God) Lord 92
Sayanacharya 3
Scheduled castes 115, 123, 135
Scheduled tribe 115, 123, 135
Schopenhauer 18, 30, 49, 52, 59
Scintilla animate 67
Scriptures 52
Seersa 79
Self 19
Self-consciousness 57
Self-control 95
Self-discipline 60
Self-hypnotism 19
Self-introspection 93
Self-projected 82
Self-realisation 60, 77
Self-satisfaction 93
Semitic race 46
Separatist 6
Serpent God 24
Seven penitents 125
Seven stars 125
Sexual intercourse 84
Shaivas 110
Shaivism 11, 37, 38, 58
Shaivite sects 110
Shakta 58, 110
Shaktism 38
Shancha 104
Shanta 91
Shelley 56, 57
Shiva 6, 10, 12, 58
Shivalinga 9
Shiva lingam 9, 183
Shree 14
Shreemati 14
Shri Krishna 28
Shri Ramakrishna 37
Shudras 20
Siddhi, 59, 82
Sister in-law's 174
Smriti 70, 116, 166
Sons of God 53
Social hierarchy 113
Social rites 84
Socio-economic conditions 124
Socrates 20
Solar 107
Solon 120
Son-bearing 94
Soul 32
Soya-yoga 78
Spiritual attainment 74
Spiritual capabilities 99

Spiritual freedom 116
Spiritual impulses 61
Spiritualistic literature 101
Spiritual life 83
Spiritual mind 82
Spiritual odyssey 51
Spiritual perfection 105
S. Radhakrishnan 59
Sri Aurobindo 36, 46, 69
Sri Krishna 17, 21, 27, 31
Sri Sri Chandi 85
S.S. Raghavachar 36
State Governments 112
St. John 3
Stupor-inducing 50
Supreme Almighty 191
Sudras 121, 124
Svetasvatara Upanishad 20
Supreme Being 37
Supreme Brahman 4
Supreme self 46
Surendra Nath Das Gupta 39
Sutak 187
Sub-atomic particle 99
Sub-castes 122
Sub-conscious region 91
Sudra 116, 118, 125, 126, 128, 131
Sukalas 145
Sumapas 145
Summum Bonum 85, 150
Sun-God 92
Supra-rational 110
Supreme Being 69
Supreme truth 71
Susvadhas 145
Swami Vivekananda 4, 15, 17, 34, 53, 54, 58, 59, 75, 118
Swastika 13, 14
Sweden 179
Sweet-heart 168
Switzerland 179

Tad Ekam 15
Tagore 54
Taittiriya Upanishad 62
Tantric practices 38
Tantrikas 58
Tanu 176
Tamaguna 10, 22
Tamas 12, 185
Tamas Bimbam 12
Technological corrosion 141
Technological culture 71
Tejas 91
Tennyson 36, 56
Tentons 51
The Living Bible 159
Theory of evolution 4
Theosophical Society 54
Thermo-nuclear 101
Thoreau 55
Thought-pattern 78
Time 10
Transcendental Meditation 83
Traditional patterns 135
Trenchant formula 66
Trident 10, 11
Trimurti 10, 11
Trinity 11, 12, 155
Trisula 10, 11
Tulsi 146, 147
Tung 94
Twice-born 124, 131

Udaka Karma 185
Ultimate Bliss 160
Ultimate Reality 36, 40, 61, 62, 68, 77
Unconscious layers 50
Unencumbered women 161
Universal Brahman 92
Universal brotherhood 191
United States 90, 182
Universal whole 192
Universe 3, 18
Unseen infinite 36
Untouchables 111
Up a 17
Upanayan 148, 156
Upanayana ceremony 155
Upanishads 14, 15, 17, 21, 26, 37, 39, 42, 49, 52, 59, 62, 63, 66, 69, 70, 75, 91, 103, 145, 192
Upanishadic 192
Upanishadic connotation 56
Upanishadic philosophy 52
Upanishadic vedanta 57
Urban civilization 51
U.S.A 124
U.S. Naipal 50
Uterine blood 163
Uttar Pradesh 186

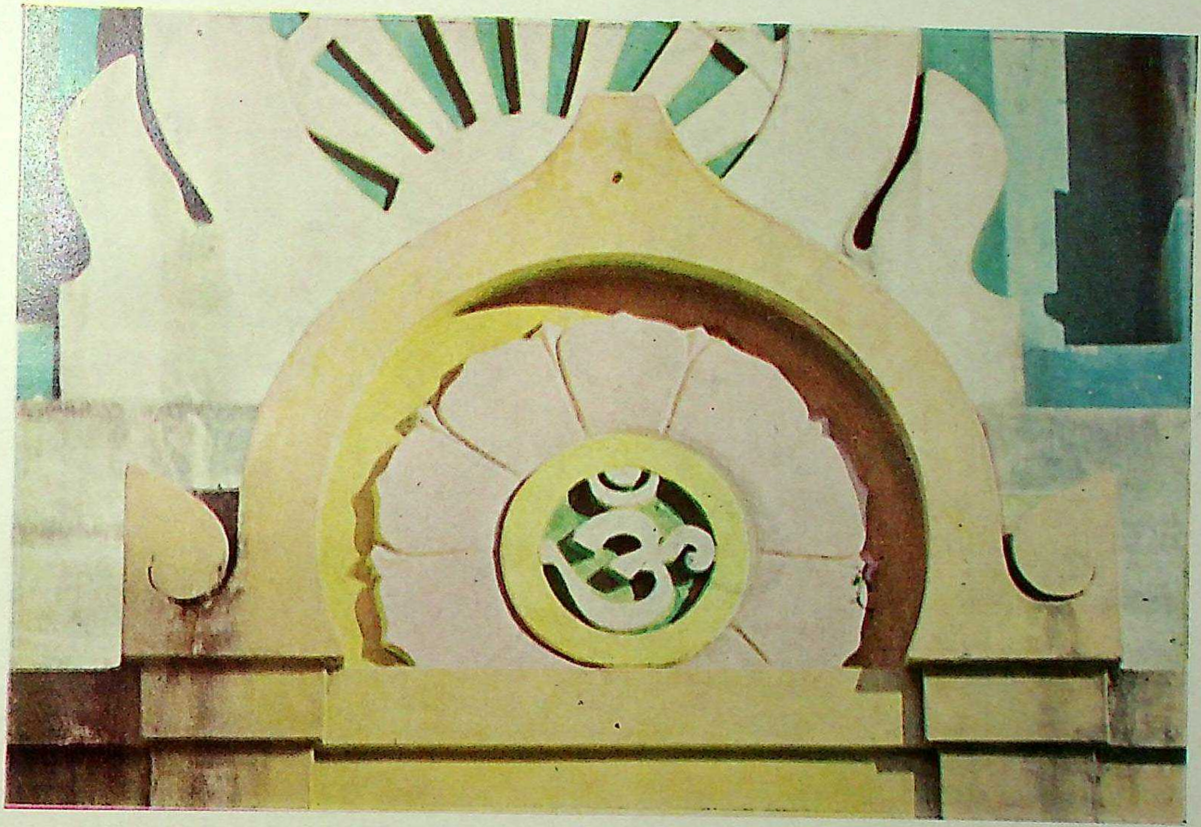
Uttarayana 145

Vairajas 145
Vaishnavas 110
Vaishanavite 110
Vaishnavism 11, 58
Vaishyas 20, 97, 118, 121, 124, 126, 128, 131, 156
Vanaprastha 15, 96
Vanaprastha Ashram 89
Varuna 15
Varna 111, 118, 121, 128, 155, 164
Varna dharma 117
Varna vyavastha 111, 129
Vasana 64
Vashitwa 82
Vasista 90, 95, 125
Vatsalya Bhava 23
Veda 3, 9, 21, 57
Vedanta 3, 14, 20, 37, 38, 56, 58, 75, 112, 155
Vedanta movement 54
Vedantic philosophy 30, 54
Vedas 14, 15, 21, 41, 59, 65, 68, 70, 83, 90, 95, 109, 116, 117 ,129, 155, 160, 166
Vedic 93
Vedic Aryans 145
Vedic Hindus 145
Vedic Religion 3
Veera 79
Vicissitudes 85
Victimization 111
Victor Hugo 52
Vidaya 104, 156
Vigraha 21
Vijanesvara 164
Vishnu 7, 10, 11, 23, 57, 146, 155, 158, 176
Vishnu purana 53
Viswamitra 125
Vishva 66
Vivah 158
Vivekananda patrika 141
Vratyastoma 156
Vrindavana 147

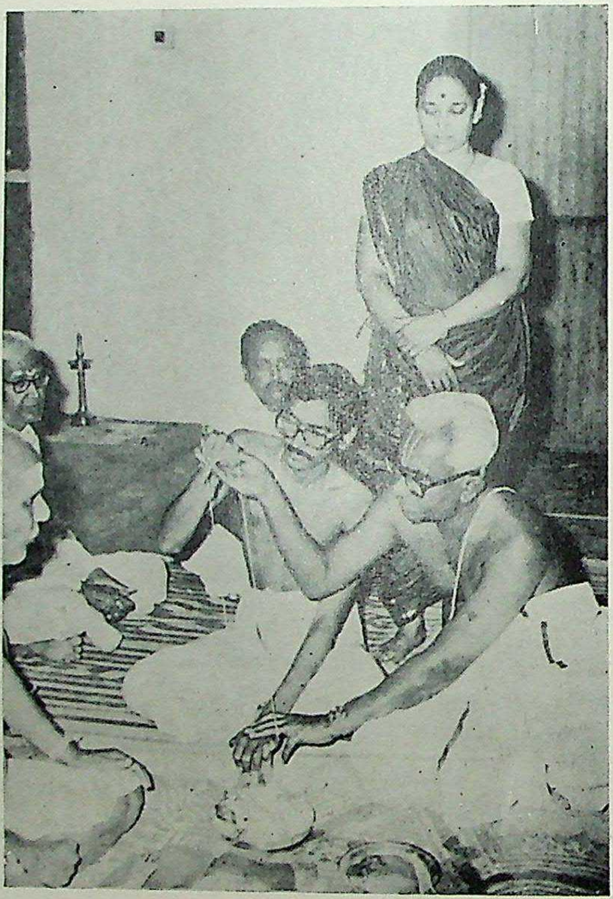
Wales 179
Water God 92
W.E. Forbe 53
Wendell Thomas 54
Western Civilization 53, 89
Westerners 72, 83
Western land 54
Western missionaries 73
Western standards 56
White 166
Whitman 54
Widower 160
William Blakes 56
William Carey 72
William James 54
Wordsworth 56

Yajna 105, 158
Yajnavalkya 38, 48, 62, 103, 156
Yaju 7
Yajur 7
Yajur veda 4, 13
Yama 42, 43, 79, 145
Yantras 6
Yasuda 23
Yatraka 82
Yoga 29, 31, 74, 77, 78, 81, 82, 90, 92, 96, 157
Yoga pranayan 157
Yoga psychology 67
Yoga-therapy 83
Yogavasistha 109, 110
Yogi 79
Yogic 10
Yogic pranayam 80
Yogis 99, 101
Yoni 9

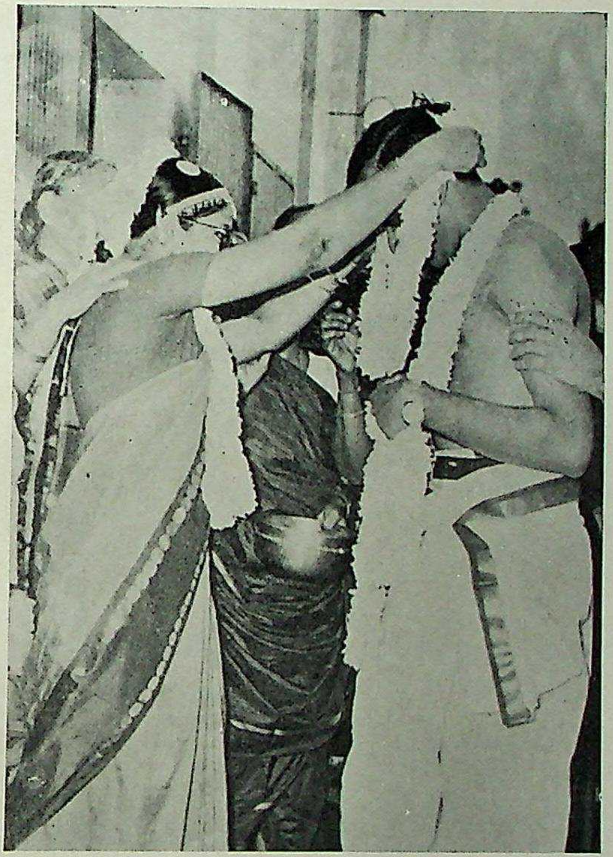
Zend-Avesta 117
Zeroastra 52



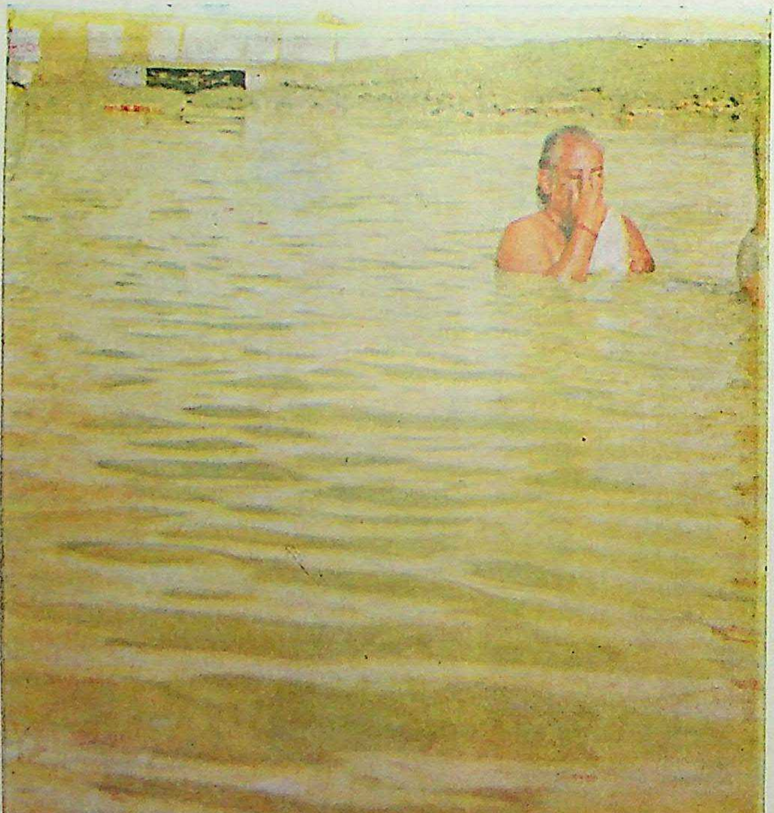
1. Hindu Logos – OM



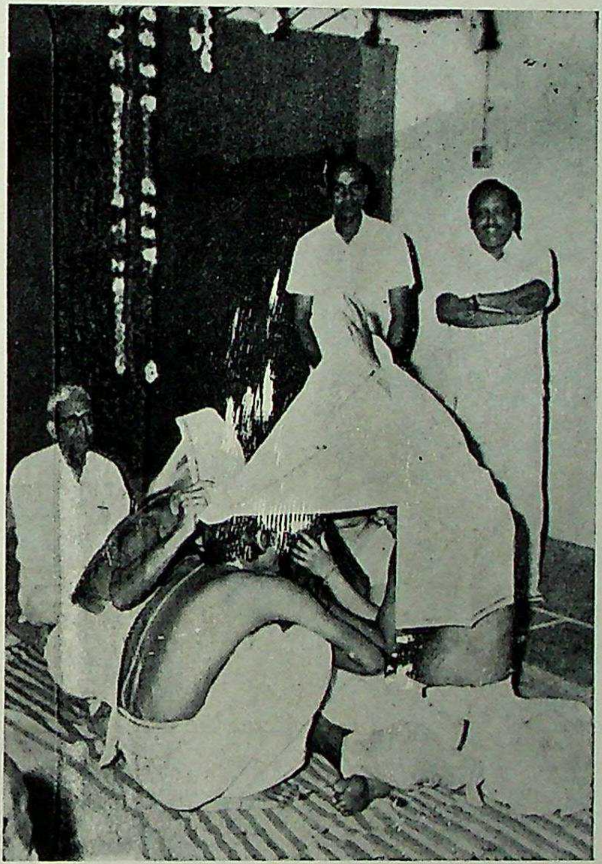
2. Sanctification of Sacred-Thread



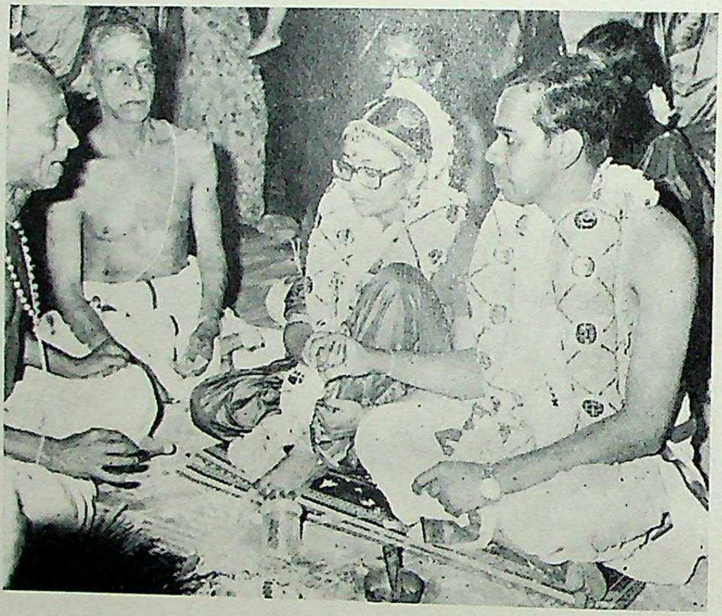
3. At the time of 'Jaymala' the bride officially welcomes the groom to her house for wedding. The groom reciprocates by garlanding her.



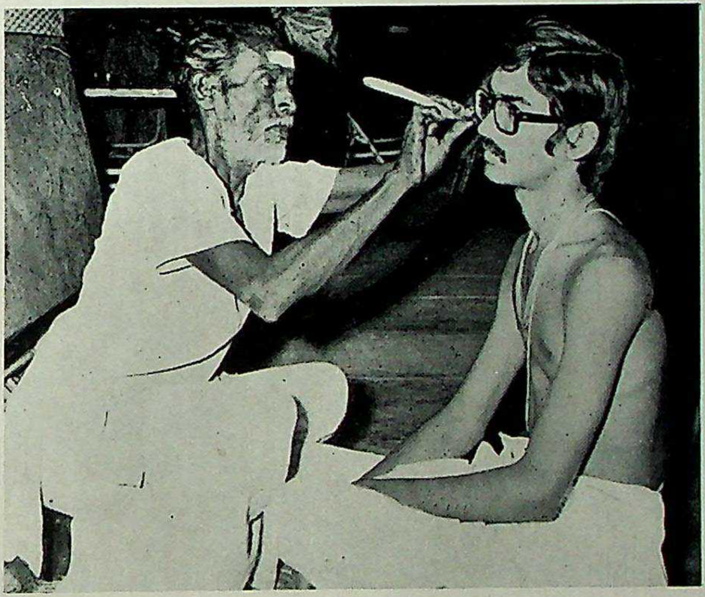
4. Chanting of Hindu Seed Words—Gayatri Mantra



5. Seed words are taught at the time of *Upanayan*

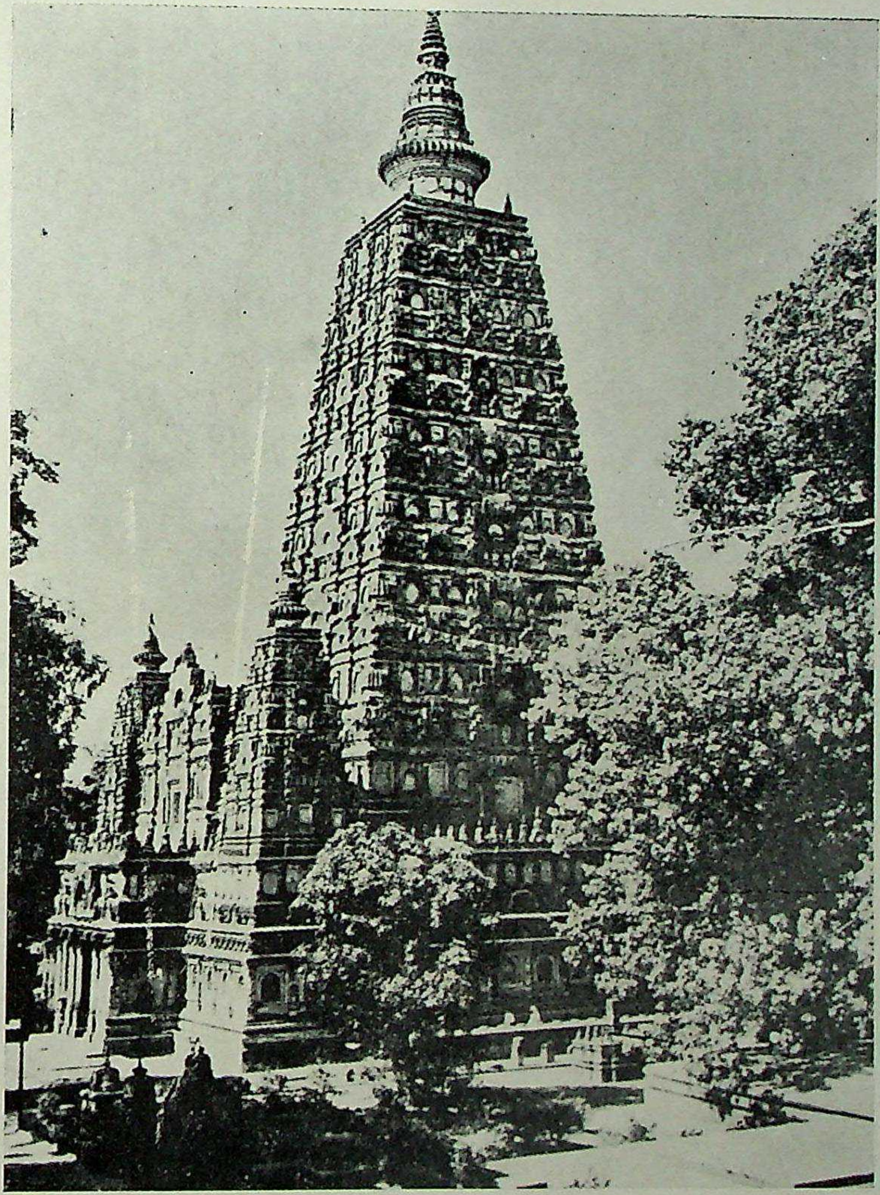


6. The husband accepted the wife at the end of the ceremony.



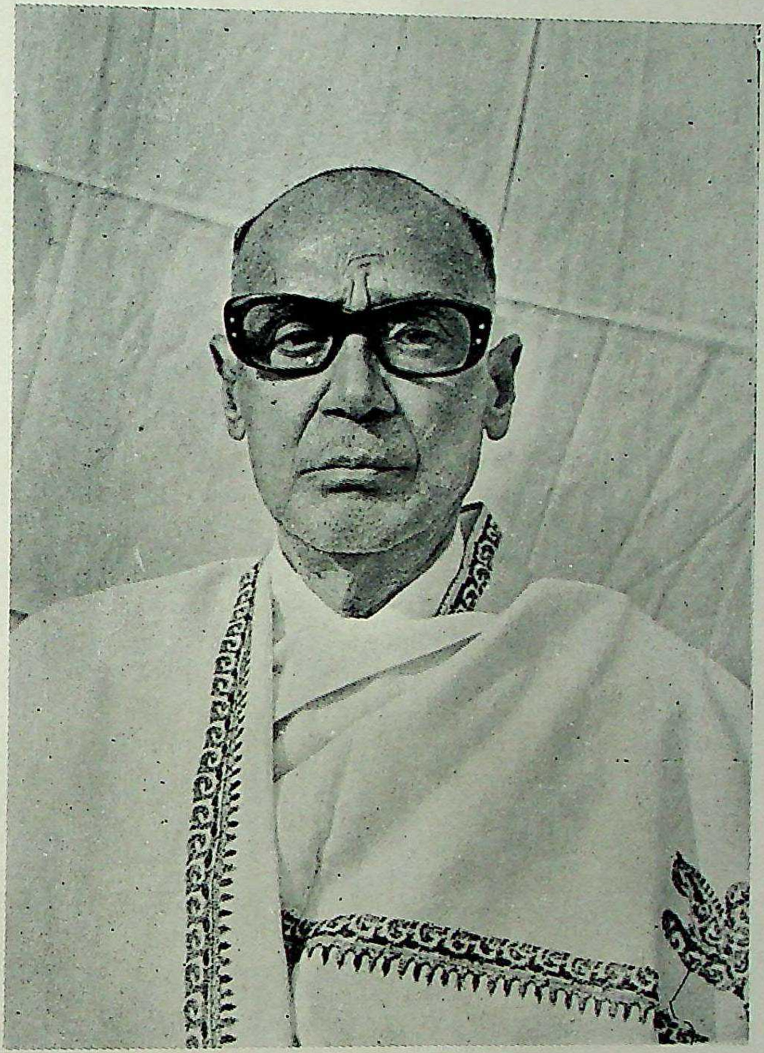
7. Shaving off hair – an act of Purification before the '*Upanayam*' ceremony.

8. A Saint and a Hindu Brahmin are engaged in the Vedic discourses

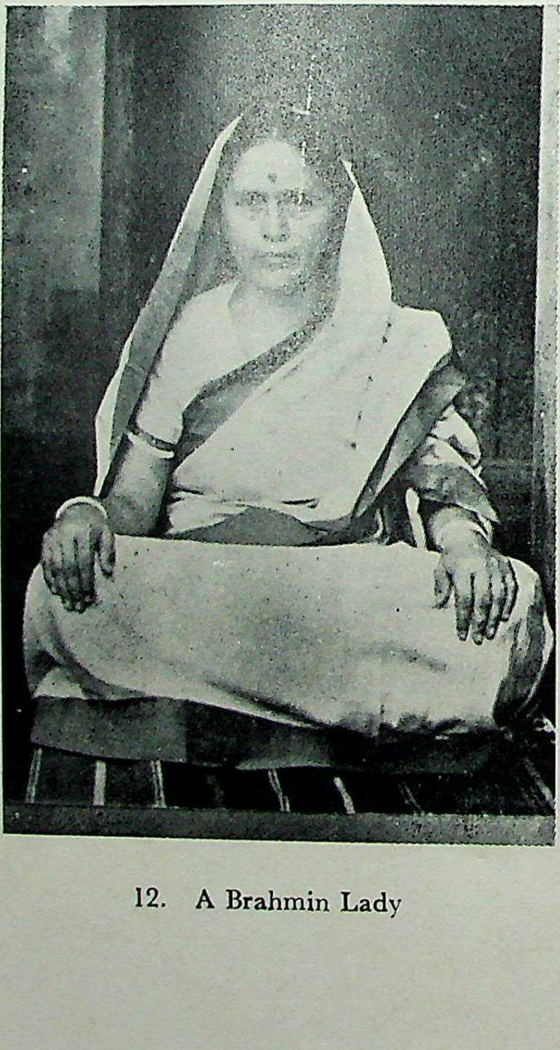


9. A Hindu Temple

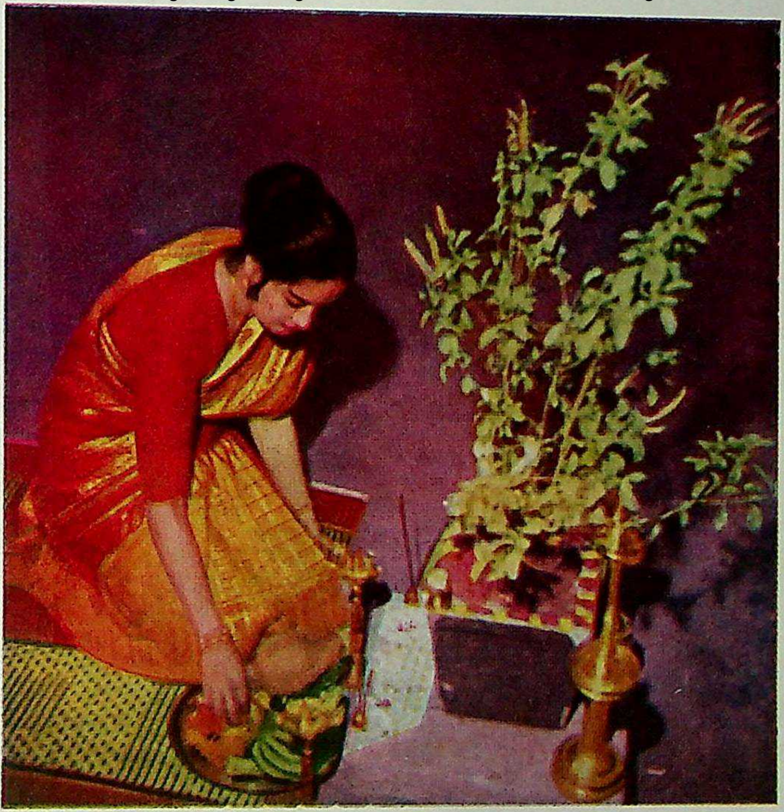
10. It's said that the Hindus worship Monkies, Cows, Snakes...



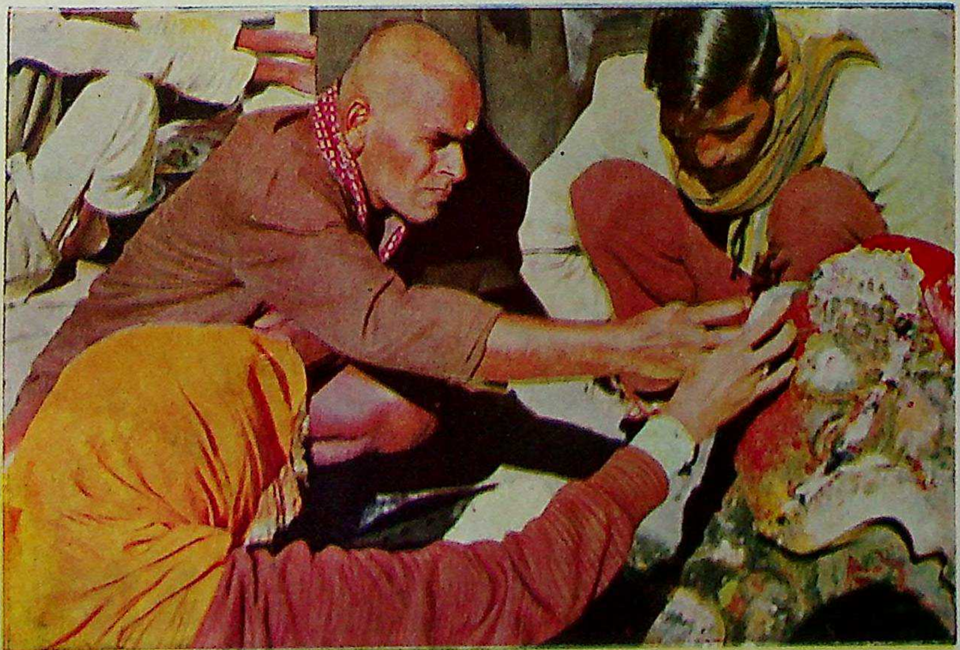
11. An Intellectual Hindu Brahmin



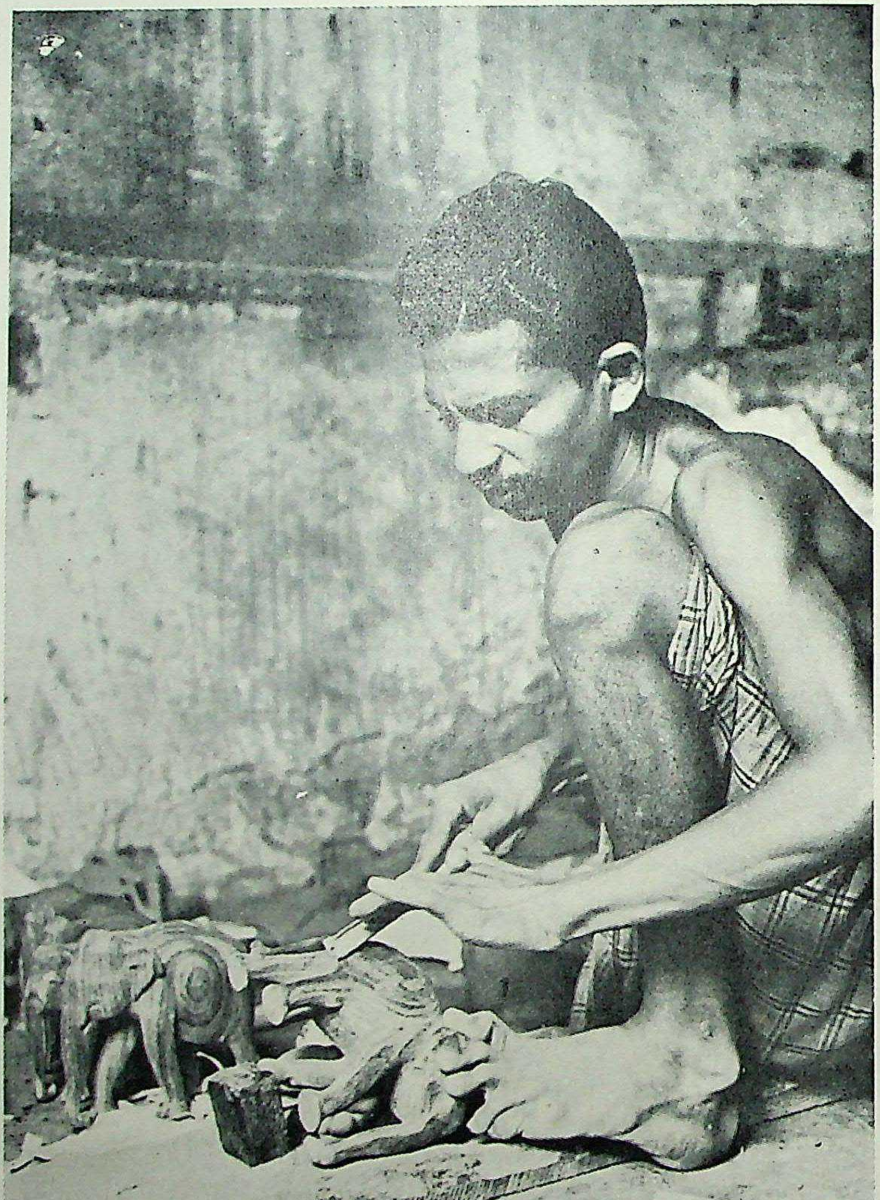
12. A Brahmin Lady



13. Worshipping the Tulsi Plant



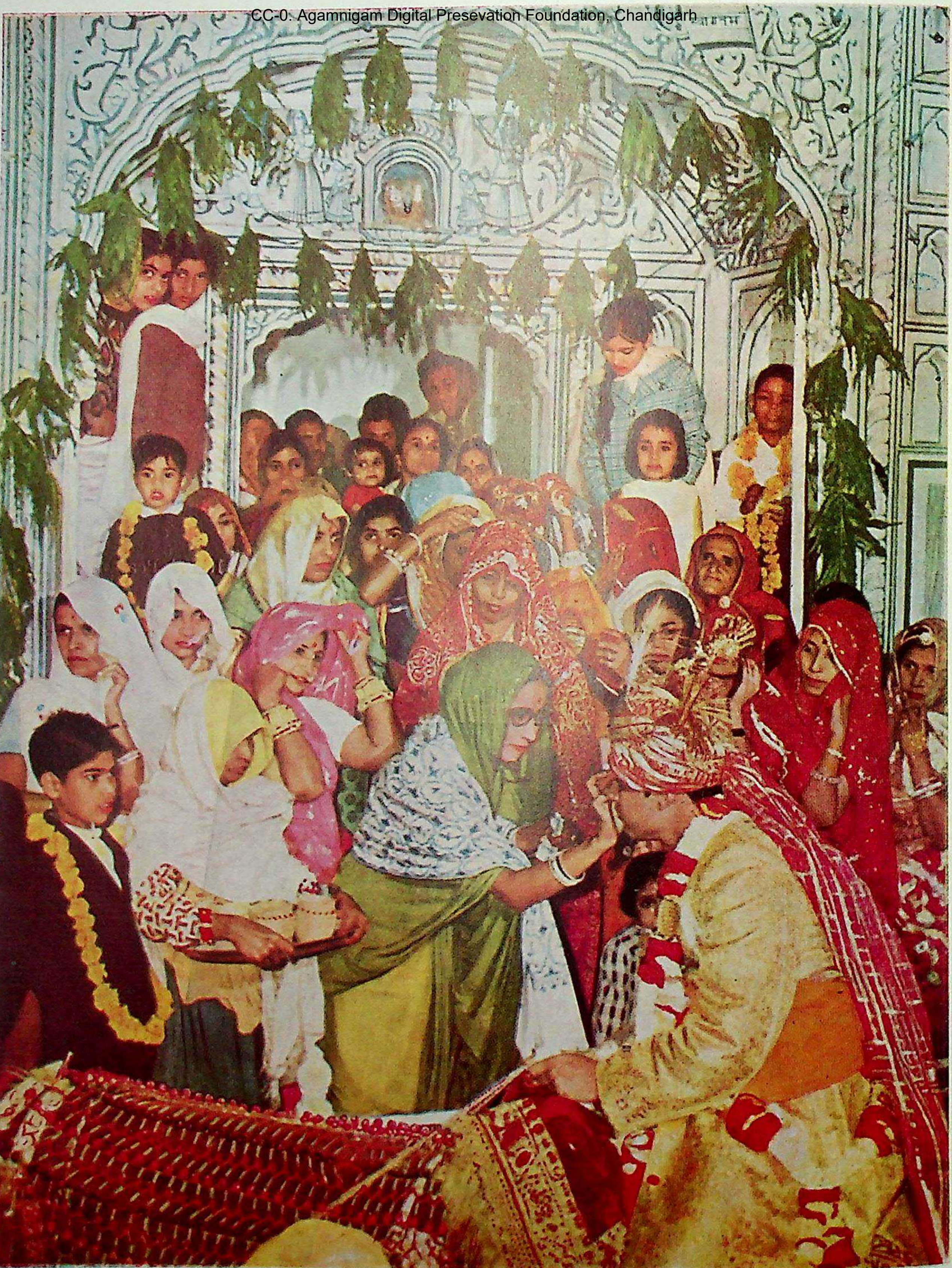
14. A Brahmin Worshipping a Hindu Deity



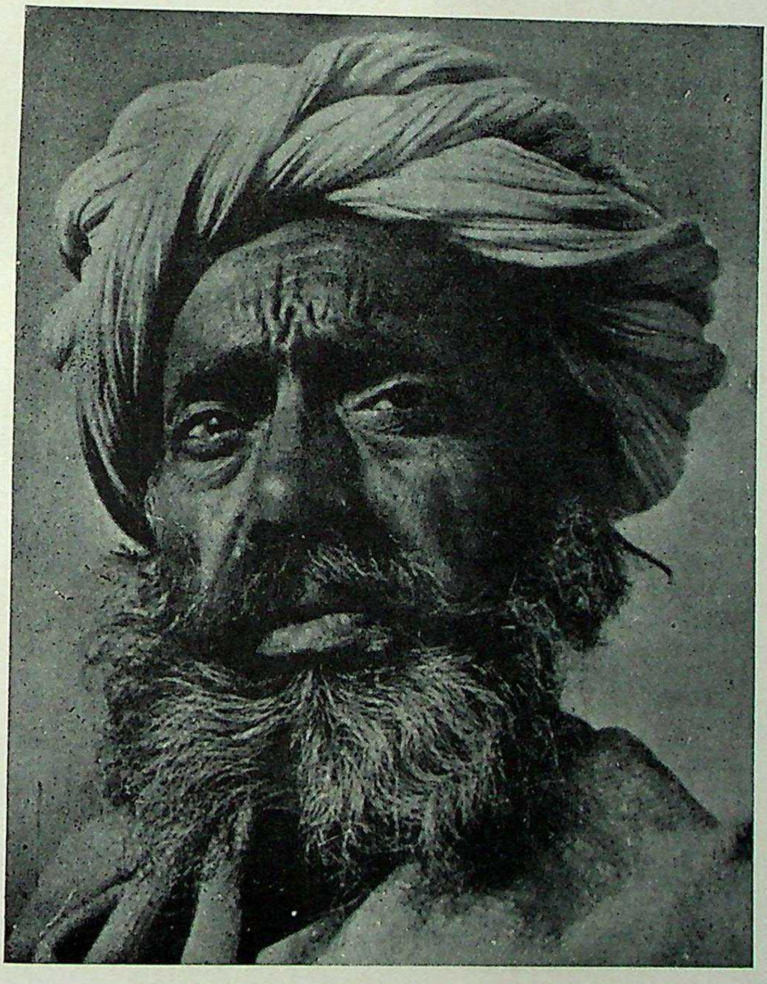
15. A Hindu Craftsman

16. A Peasant Woman

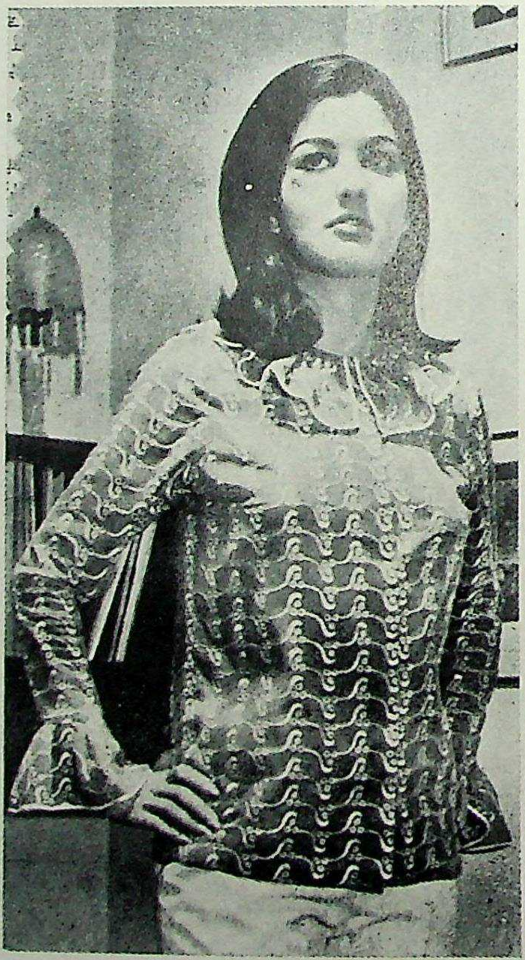
17. A Fisher Woman



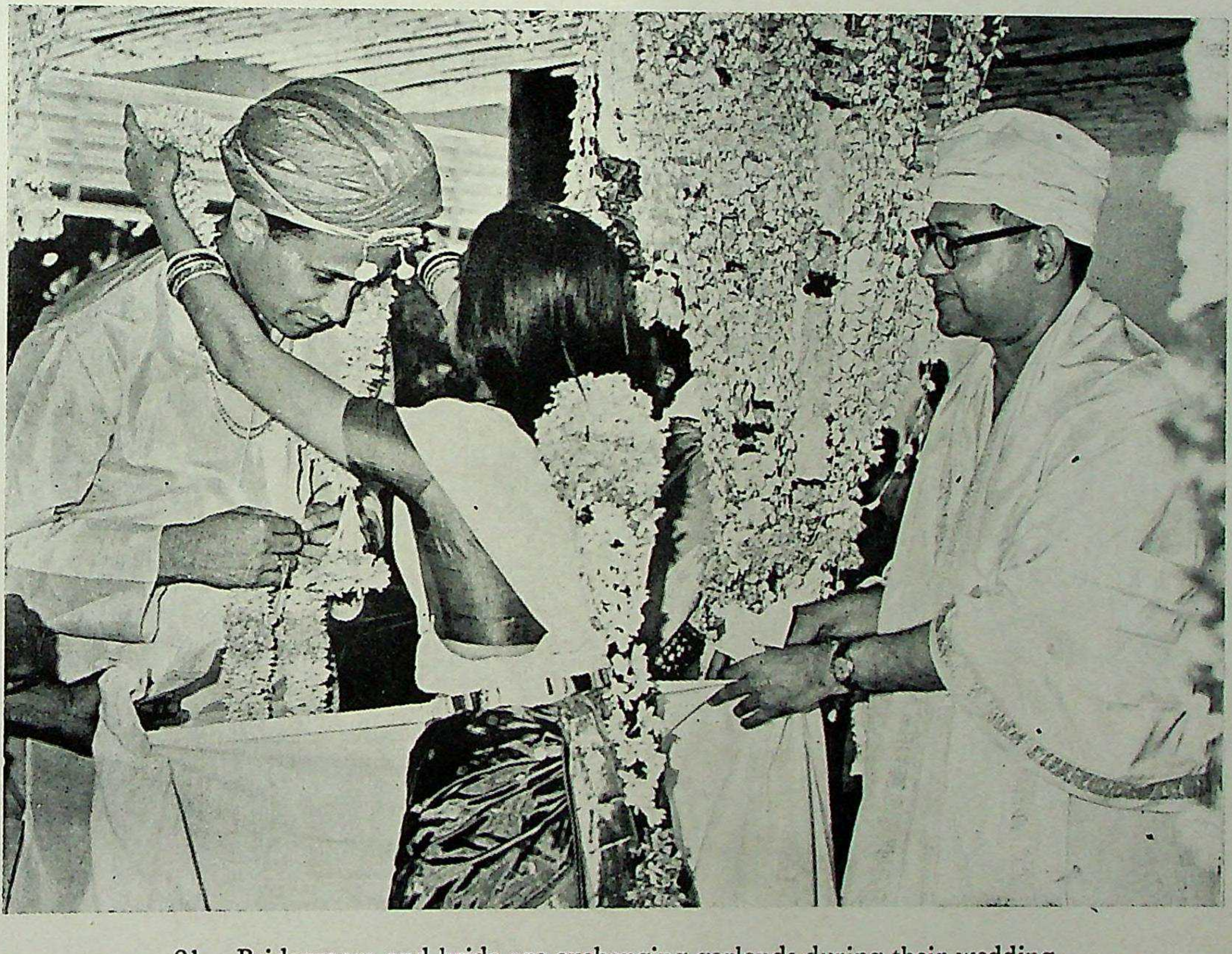
18. On his arrival at the bride's house, the bridegroom is welcomed with a tilak (a mark on his forehead)



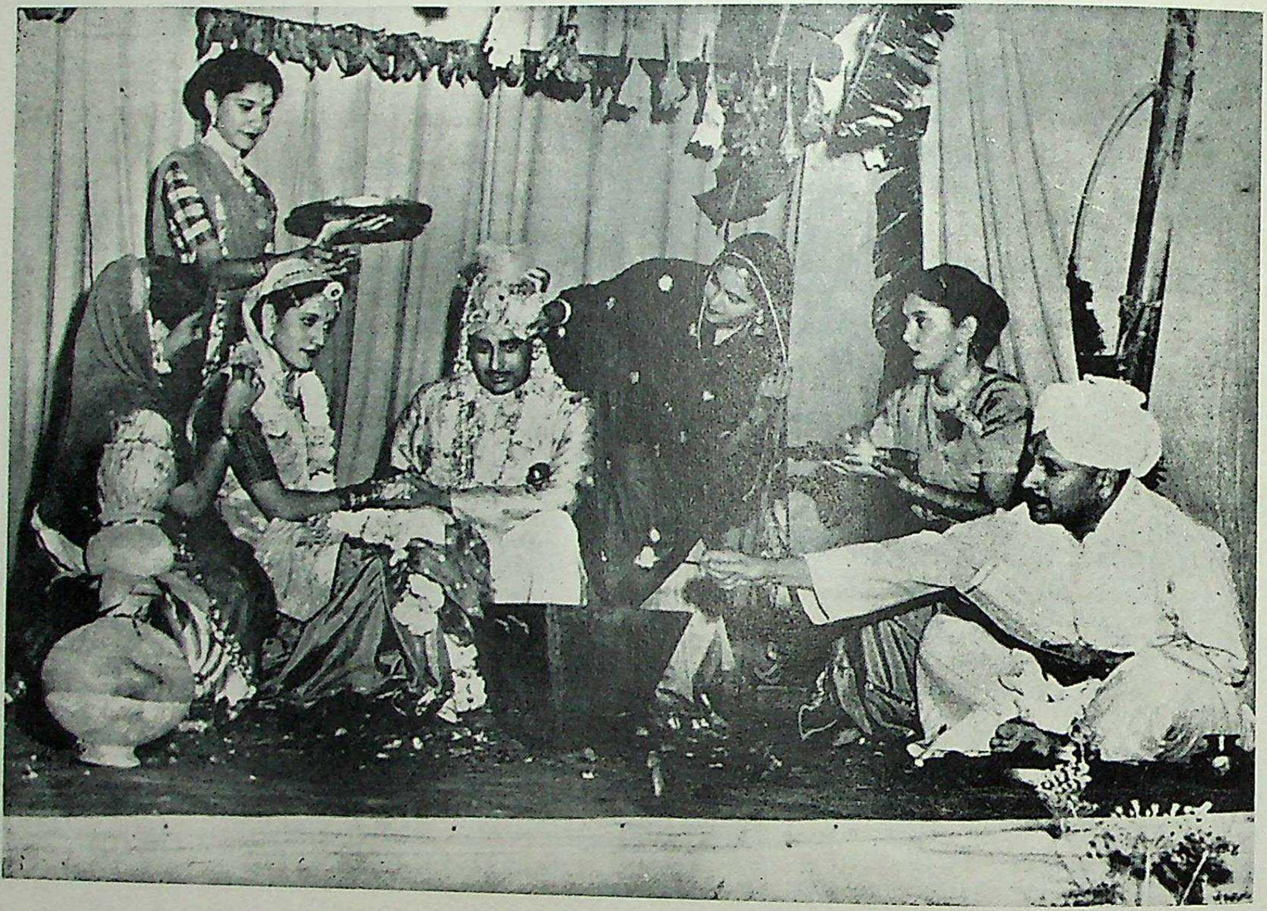
19. A Hindu Farmer



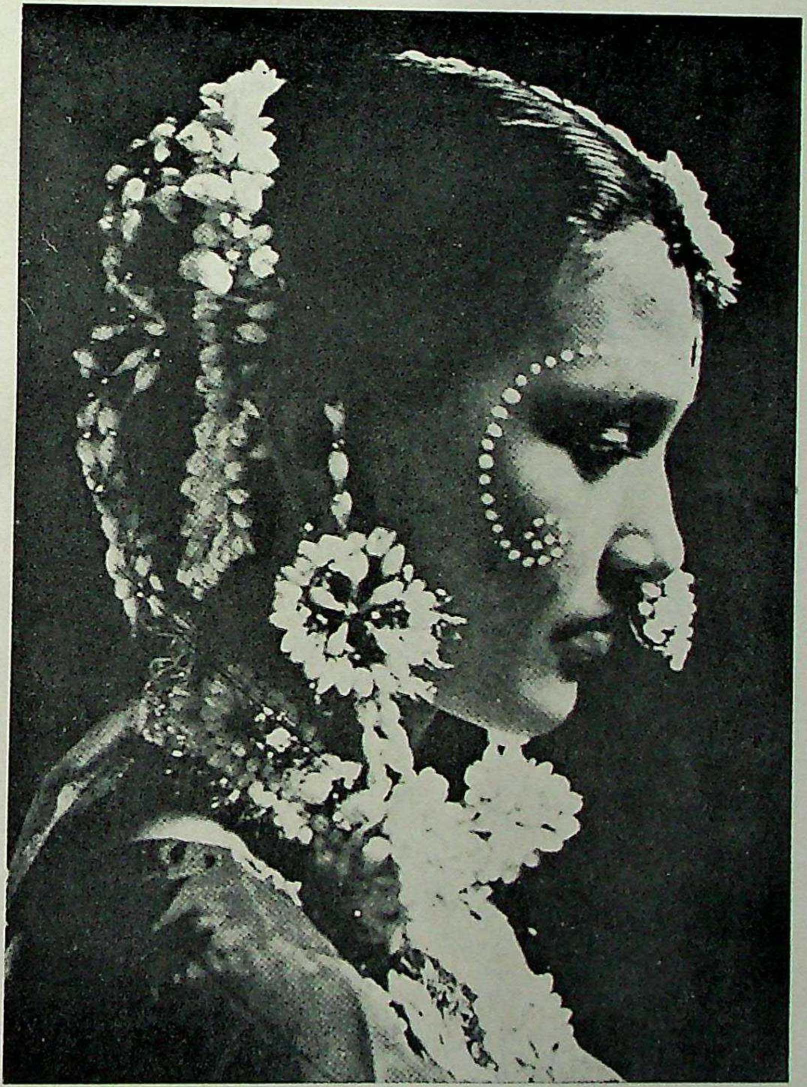
20. A Higher Caste modern girl



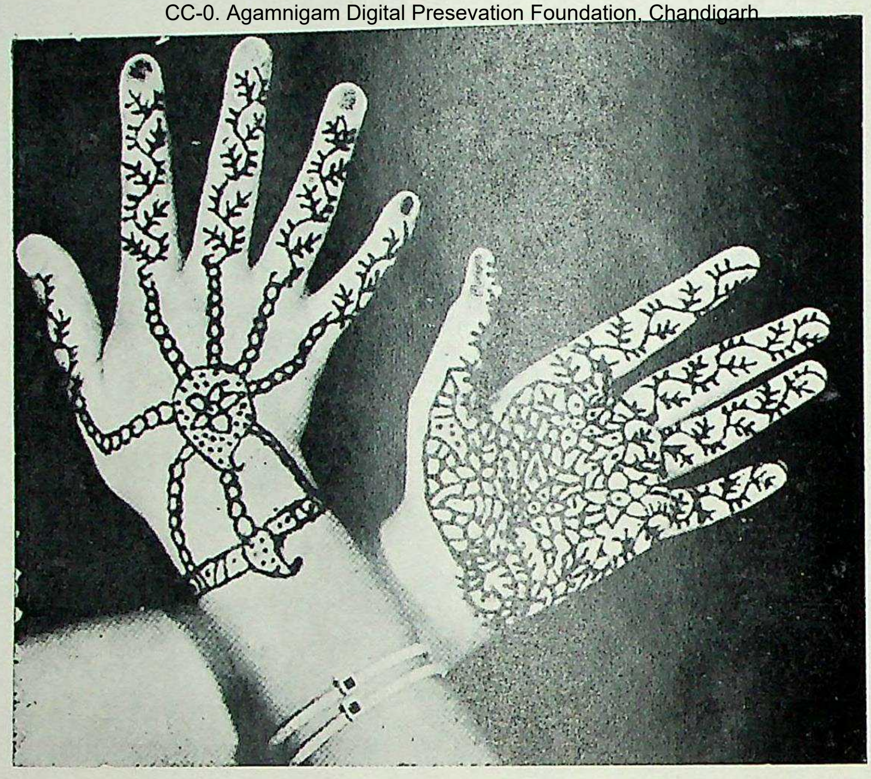
21. Bridegroom and bride are exchanging garlands during their wedding.



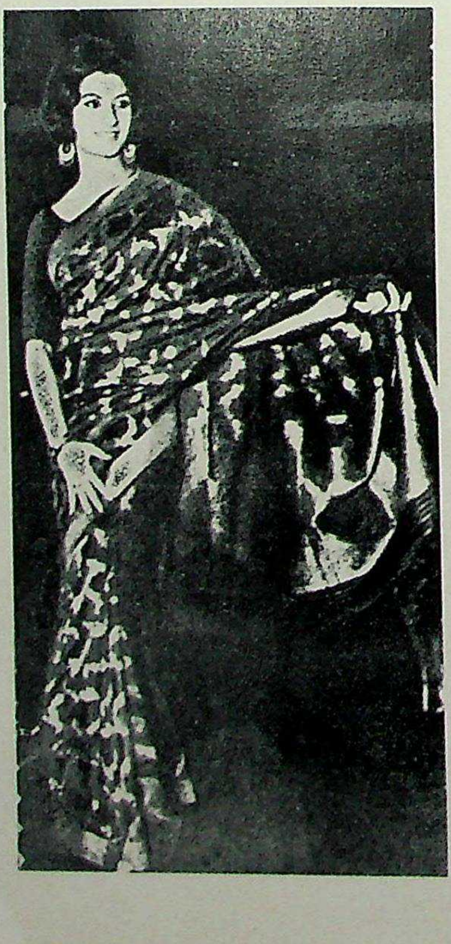
22. The bridegroom and the bride are in front of the *Fire-God*. The Priest is commissioning the wedding ceremony.



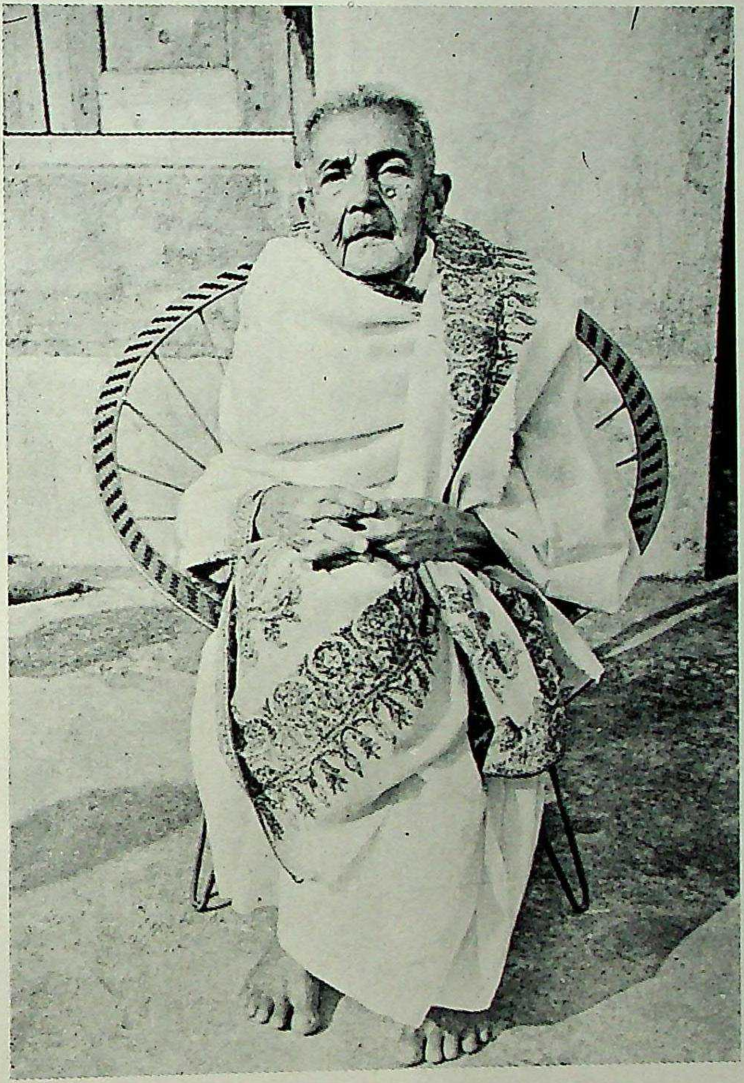
23. A Hindu bride



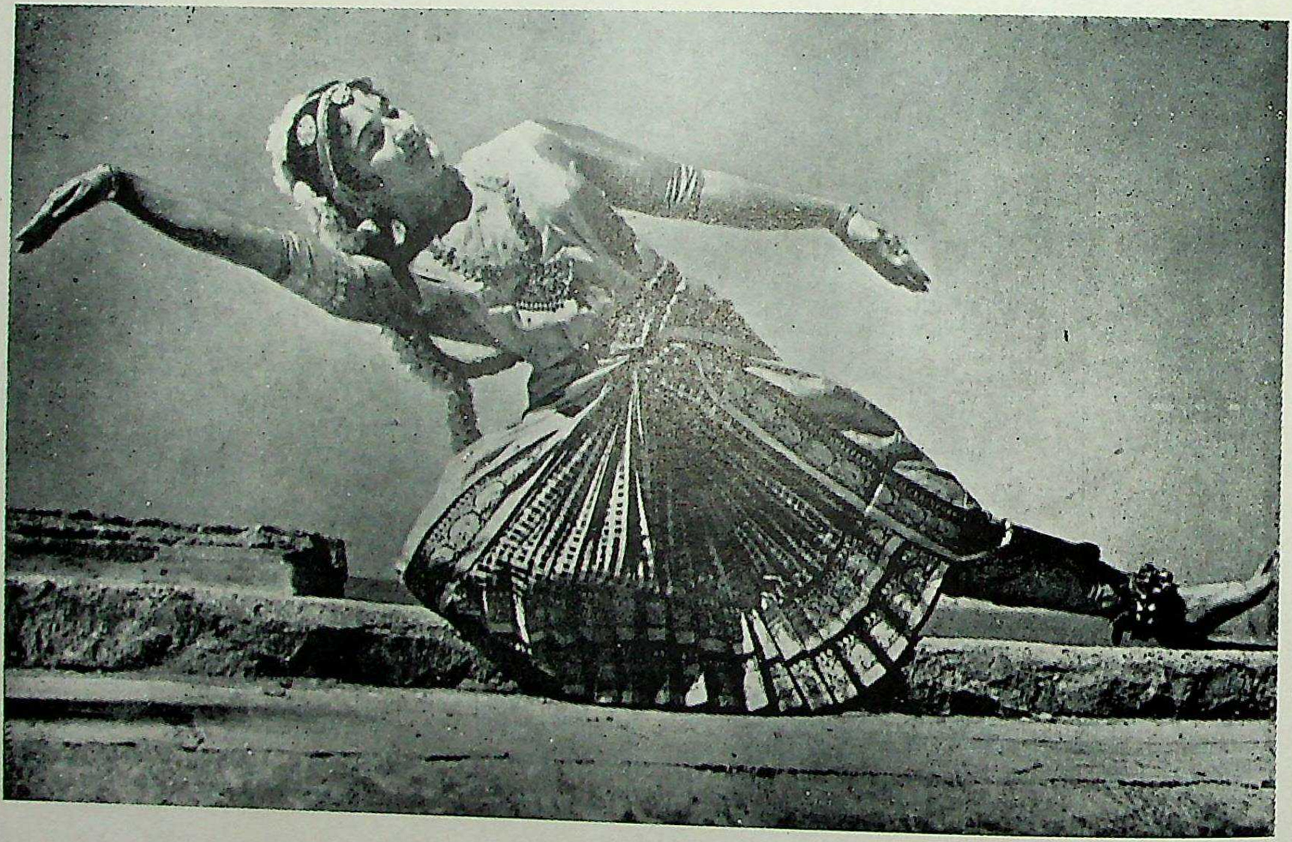
24. An elaborate pattern (Mehendi) on bride's hands



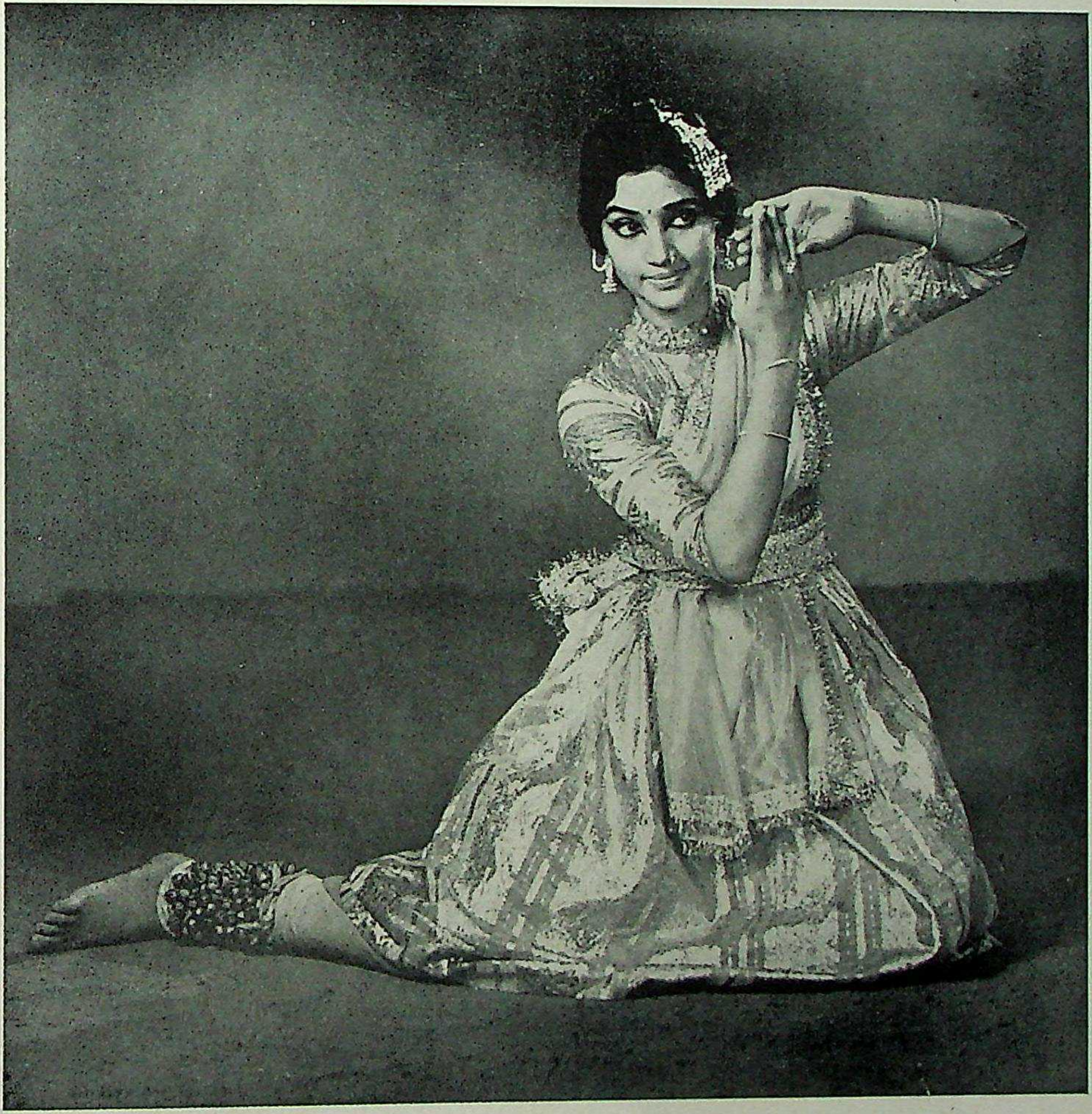
25. A Modern Hindu woman



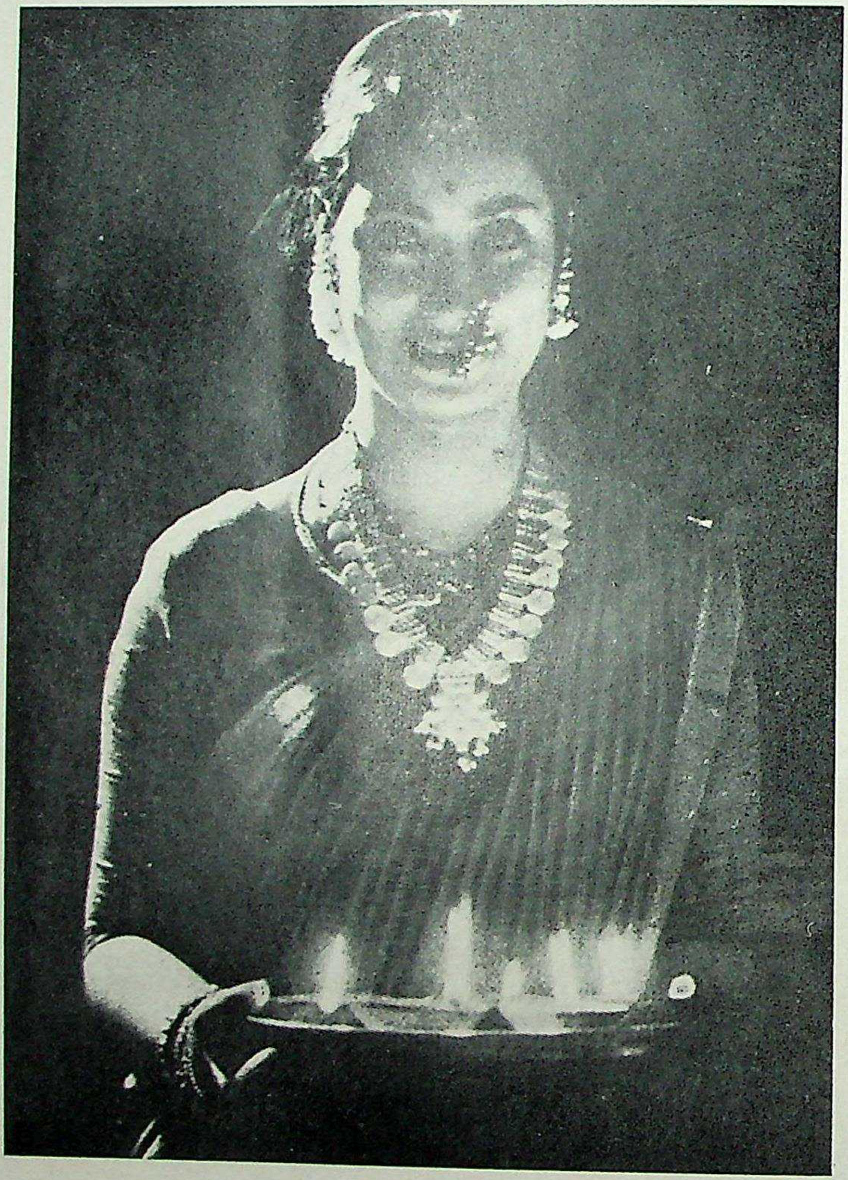
26. A Hiudu widow



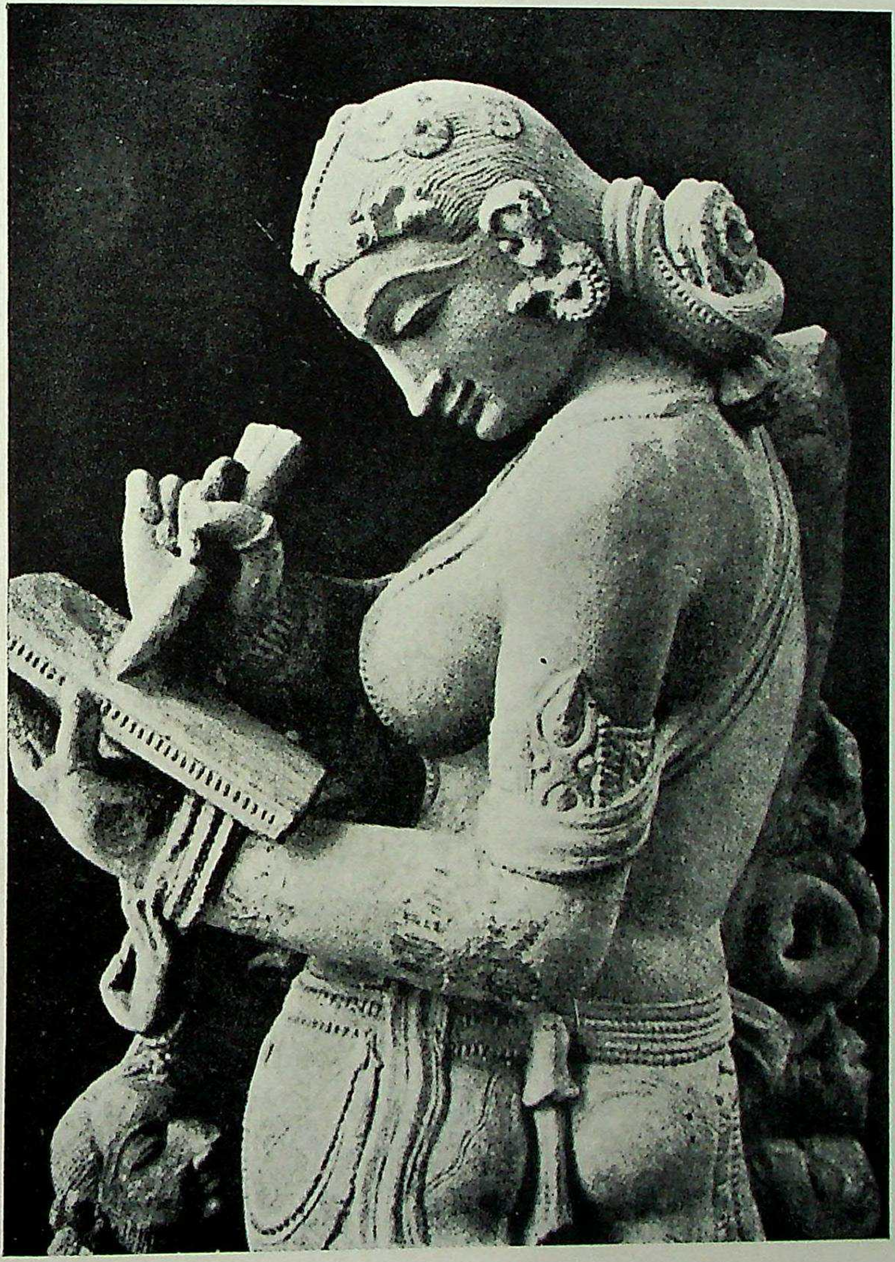
27. A Temple dance



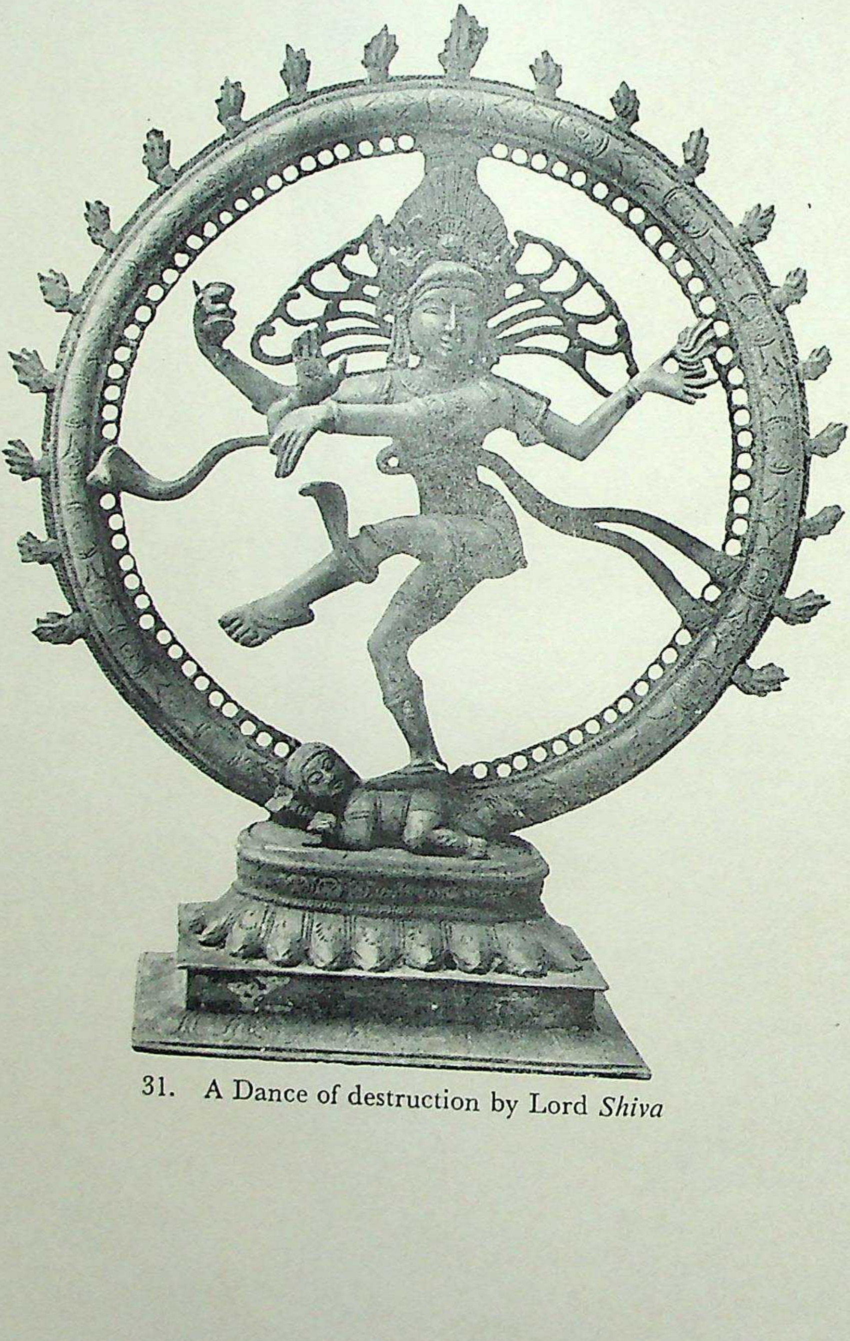
28. An entertainer



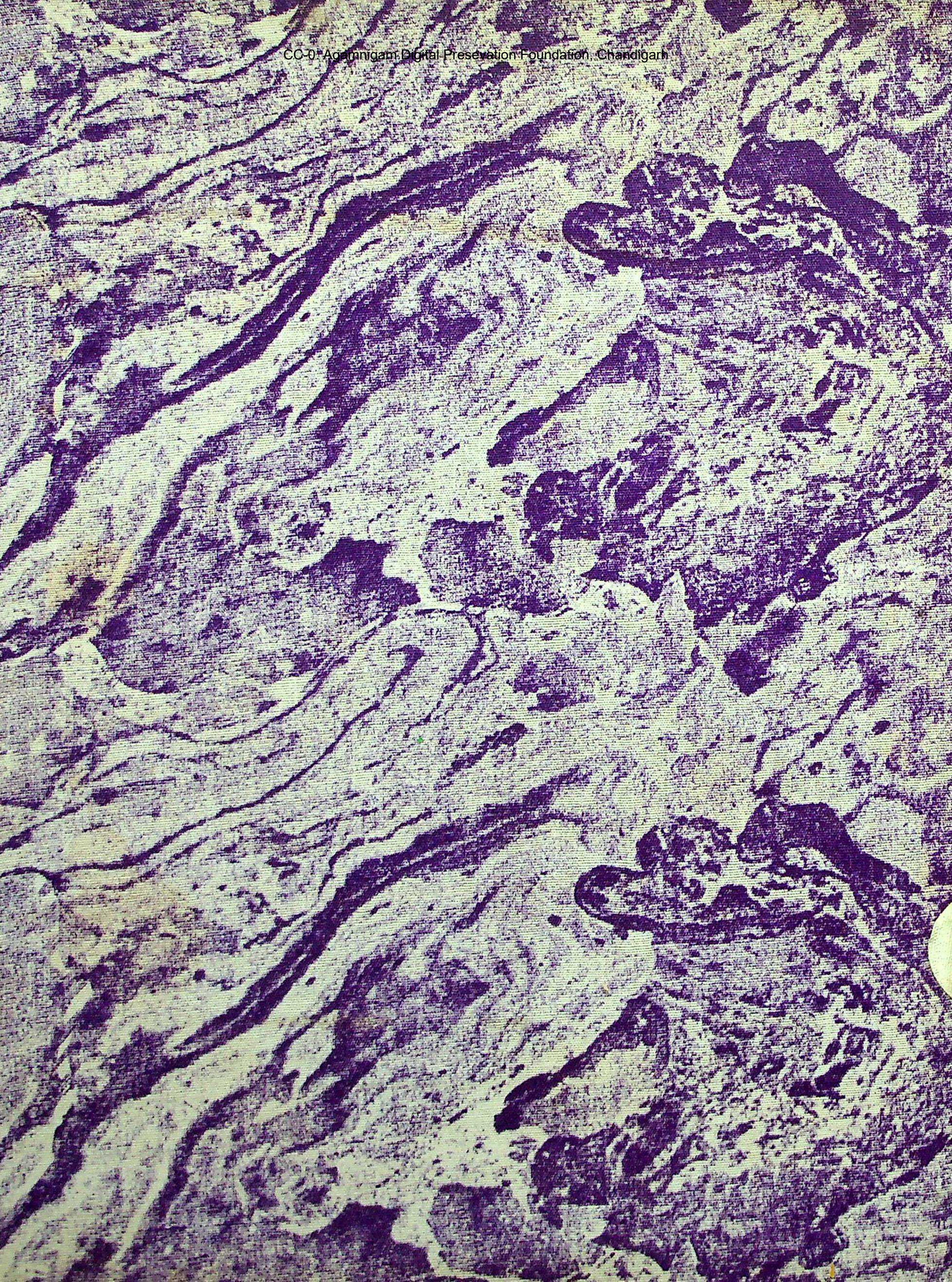
29. Festival of Lights



30. A beautiful Hindu Sculpture



31. A Dance of destruction by Lord *Shiva*



Agam Kala Prakashan